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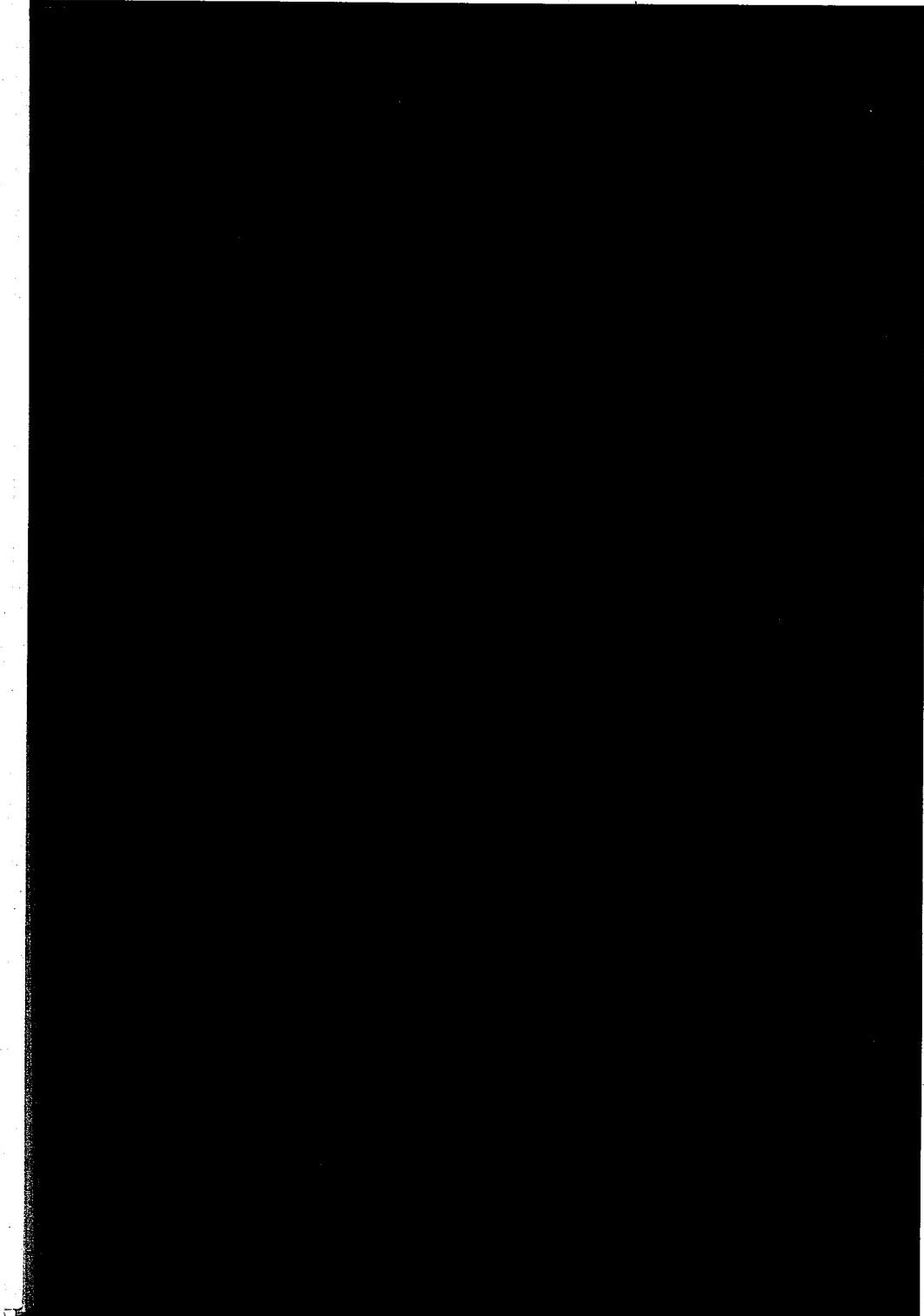


SHORT STORIES

PERSONAL ESSAYS

POETRY

Marilyn Brown • Margaret Young • Patty Kennington
Mark Edward Koltko • Pauline Mortensen • John Bennion



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Issue 2

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The *Wasatch Review International* is a biannual literary journal dedicated to creative writing. Contributions from authors of any religion are welcome. Manuscripts (short stories, poetry, personal essays, drama, book reviews) must in some way explore the Mormon culture. Our aim is fine literature—not religious politics—and manuscripts should not be written to prove or disprove Church policies or doctrines.

Manuscripts should not exceed eight thousand words in length. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and preferably be available on IBM floppy disk (WordPerfect, MicroSoft Word, DOS text file). Each manuscript should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Those whose manuscripts are published will receive two contributor's copies. Send manuscripts to *Wasatch Review International*, P.O. Box 1017, Orem, UT 84059.

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Notes

The publication of the first issue of the *Wasatch Review International* was a dream come true. With the publication of the second issue, the reality of the *WR* is sinking in. We are proud to report that our subscription base has doubled since the first issue and is still growing. The *Wasatch Review International* is funded solely by subscriptions and small donations from subscribers. This means that you, the readers, are the major stockholders in this publication. For your investment, we will strive to give you the highest return possible in the form of fine literature.

We may be a small publication, but our standards are high. We want to see more manuscripts coming in, but please send your best and be willing to work with us. Write about the universe from your unique perspective (as a Mormon or a person acquainted with Mormons). Most of our literature has come from writers in the Rocky Mountain region, but we are happy to be including literature in this issue from New York, Oregon, Taiwan, and Chile.

Enclosed in this issue is a subscription form. You can use it to resubscribe as well as send a gift subscription to a friend. We hope you will use it to do both. We won't need to grow too much more before we will be able to publish three issues a year—and eventually four. In the Mormon culture there is great potential for some of the most unique and finest literature in the world. Now there is also a place to publish that literature. Continue your subscription and see what happens.

Correction

In the first issue we listed Michael Collins as having written the poem "The Dionysian Hierarchy First Notices Moroni and His Friends." His name is actually Michael Collings. We regret having made this mistake. Michael is a professor and a fine poet and edits the *Zarahemla*—a journal of Mormon poetry.

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Letter from the Editor

Just the Fiction, Ma'am

Tory C. Anderson

I remember my first day of classes at BYU—particularly my first day in English 115. I sat near the back of the room wondering, like everyone else, what this class had in store for me. When the door opened, I turned and saw Douglas Thayer, his round glasses propped on his nose, walk into the room. If I had only known what Douglas Thayer was going to do to me, I could have dropped his class and gone on to live a normal life.

I remember Professor Thayer's lectures for several reasons. For one thing he liked to embarrass me. Often while Professor Thayer lectured, my feet would become very hot and I would slip off my shoes to let my feet cool (my socks were clean). On one occasion Professor Thayer noticed my shoeless feet and asked, while shaking his head (at the audacity of freshmen, no doubt), that I put my shoes back on. The class thought this was funny.

Another time my whispering to Sara across the aisle bothered him and he wrote my name in huge letters across the entire chalk board. He announced that this was a technique aimed at embarrassing delinquent students in an attempt to persuade them to behave more acceptably. It worked.

These amusing memories might be all I got out of Dr. Thayer's class had he not written "The Red-Tailed Hawk" and made his

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freshmen students read it. "The Red-Tailed Hawk" is a short story that deals with a boy who has anti-establishment sentiments. To make matters worse, the boy is just reaching puberty. The story made many of us innocent freshmen raise our eyebrows. After all, we were fresh from homes run by Victorian parents and had never talked about the things like running naked through wheat fields at night. The story made us wonder about Professor Thayer's boyhood. But "The Red-Tailed Hawk" is only fiction. Just ask Professor Thayer—we did.

For some reason "The Red Tailed Hawk" spoke to me, moved me, changed me. It opened my mind to the nuances of my own life and increased my level of consciousness one hundred percent. I had done a lot of reading before I went to college, but this was the first *experience* I had ever had. "The Red-Tailed Hawk" affected me more profoundly and positively than any scripture I ever read or any talk I ever heard—and I've read powerful scriptures and heard moving talks. Ever since I read that story I wanted to become a great writer of fiction. Not because I thought there was money and fame in it, but because I wanted to be able to do to other people's lives what Douglas Thayer did to mine.

It never occurred to me that others might not see fiction as being a powerful tool for good. But my experience as a writer and editor has taught me that when compared to "true" stories, the status of fiction within the Mormon culture is low. I've heard friends describe their favorite movie saying, "And it's based on a true story!" as if that proves it should be their favorite movie. The editor of a small Mormon publishing house told me she accepted a novel manuscript because it was based on the true history of the settlement of Utah Valley. It was clear that if the book had been written exactly the same, but not based on the true history, she would have rejected it. I was shaken when an editor of one of the Church magazines told me they would not be printing fiction anymore. "Why do we need fiction when we can print true stories?" he said. Why indeed! I've read the "true" stories this editor prints. Many of them are quite touching and inspiring, but in my experience none of them have come near having the cathartic power of good fiction. How can this be? How can

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something that *didn't happen* have a more powerful, positive effect than a "true" story? The argument between fiction and true-life stories comes down to the reasoning that true life stories are true and fiction is not. Ergo, true life stories are better. However, my experience tells me that "true" stories are no truer (and often less so) than good fiction.

There are three questions you should ask before placing such high esteem on "true" stories and so little on fiction.

First, how "true to life" are "true" stories? Time tends to fog the memory where "true" stories are stored. We've all heard the fisherman or hunter tell us about the one that got away—the twenty-four-pound trout, the twenty-five-point buck. Or how about the story Bill Cosby tells so well (we may have told similar stories in earnest) about his grandmother telling him that she *walked* to school when she was a little girl—and the snow was four feet deep and the trek was ten miles and uphill both ways. Each of the four gospels in the New Testament is written with the unique perspective of a separate individual—each apostle remembering the events of Christ's ministry differently. Joseph Smith, many years after the fact, told at least three different versions of his first vision.

Second, how much of the story is being told? For decades after World War II, Japanese history books used in Japanese schools described a different war (when it came to the Japanese involvement in that war) than the American history books described. Even in our personal stories often only half the truth gets told. A woman I worked for at BYU told me that while on her mission in Texas years ago she saw many horrible things that broke her heart. But she also had many wonderful experiences that inspired her. She told me that the inspiring stories were so wonderful that the horrible stories have no importance in comparison and do not need to be told. Her telling only a part of the truth reveals a distorted picture of her mission—a distorted picture that disillusioned some missionaries when they experienced the part she didn't tell.

Third, is there any "truth" at all in this true story? Check out Soviet history (as written by the Soviets). Check out Paul Dunn history (as

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told by Paul Dunn). The Soviets fabricated history to inspire their people to be better communists. Paul Dunn fabricated history to inspire youth to be better Christians. But can truth be fabricated? Imitation leather looks and feels like leather, but the person who tries to tell you it *is* real leather is lying. And just as Christ wasn't flattered when evil spirits testified of him, truth isn't flattered by lies "told for truth's sake."

Experience has taught me to question every "true" story that I hear. It doesn't matter who tells it—a general authority or the local politician—I have to ask, "How accurate is this story?" "What is being left out?" and "What is the storyteller trying to get me to do and how is that affecting the story he or she is telling me?"

What is weakness in true stories is strength in fiction. In fiction we don't wonder whether the characters really existed and did what is said they did. We *know* they didn't. I don't take good fiction seriously because "it really happened!" but because it offers me experience (which to me is synonymous with truth). This is important because experience is the meaning of life.

Truth cannot be got at directly. If it could, I believe God would have done away with the idea of sending us to earth. Instead, he would have simply given us our bodies and the truth and been done with it. But truth is something that cannot be given. It must be obtained through experience—and each of us has to experience it for ourselves. I think Christ was speaking of this in his parable of the ten virgins. No matter how much they wanted to, the five wise virgins could not give of their oil to the five unwise virgins. I'm sure that God has plenty of oil in his lamp. But even he is unable to give any of it away.

Yet in our mortal naiveté, we think we can share our oil. We try to force the truth of chastity, the truth of tithing, the truth of honesty, the truth of love, the truth of God's existence across the pulpit in the form of sermons. Then we augment these sermons with "true" stories that have been edited, altered, and sometimes even fabricated to make sure people *get the truth*. It isn't that these sermons and "true" stories are bad. It's that the prevailing attitude is that they are *all* we need to learn the truth. The speakers speak from *their* experience

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and hope we understand, but unless we have comparable experience, we aren't going to understand. If we have had comparable experience we already know what the speaker is talking about, so he or she isn't all that much help. If we haven't had comparable experience, we won't understand the speaker although we may gain knowledge.

Reality shows us that sermons aren't all we need. Our youth continue to learn about morality and immorality through experience. Our adults learn about loving, marrying, hating, and divorcing through experience. Anyone who truly knows God knows him through experience. We cannot learn the truth of anything without experiencing it. Sermons and "true" stories act as guides, but understanding depends upon experience.

Am I saying that a person can't understand something like the ugliness of unchastity without experiencing it? Yes, but I'm not saying a person has to be unchaste to gain this experience. Is this a paradox? It's no more paradoxical than Christ feeling the pain of our sins, the pain of our pains, while in the Garden of Gethsemane. The pain he felt was real, not imagined or sermonized. And yet the sins he suffered for weren't *his* sins (i.e., his experiences). Does he understand the person who has been unchaste? Completely. Has he been unchaste? No. He experienced unchastity and its eternal effects vicariously. We have the ability to experience vicariously too. We *have* to experience vicariously or it will take four billion earth lives (give or take a million) to experience what we need to experience to become like God.

This is where fiction comes in. Good fiction is refined life. It gets at the heart of the meaning of life without ever talking about it like sermons do. The meaning of life is experience. *Good* fiction is experience. A sermon is just knowledge. In sacrament meeting I hear a talk on chastity. The speaker quotes scripture and makes it clear that to be chaste is good and to be unchaste is bad (i.e., it brings spiritual death). The speaker tells "true stories" specially chosen to prove the point. If I'm attentive and have an open heart throughout the talk, what have I learned? To be chaste is good; to be unchaste is bad. These are things I must understand if I am ever to become

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like God. However, how much has the sermon taught me about the heart and soul of man and woman? I have learned that the unchaste man is bad or is doing something bad and that the chaste woman is good or is doing something good. That's all.

Good fiction strikes much deeper. Good fiction isn't concerned with teaching lessons (although lessons can be derived from it), but with the heart and soul of life and the human beings who live it. The more experience I have, the more I understand this heart and soul, myself, and my fellow human beings. I have my own living experience, but good fiction expands that experience tenfold—one hundred-fold—and makes it possible to apply any knowledge I have.

Madame Bovary is a work of fiction that deals with, among other things, adultery. Sermons and their "true stories" have already taught me that adultery is bad, so what could I gain from reading a fictional account of adultery? I think that God knows a lot more about adultery than that it is bad and I want to be like him and know what he knows. When the adulterer stands before God, I don't think God is going to say "You're an adulterer. You're bad. Go straight to hell." Perhaps the unrepentant adulterer will go to hell; but even so, God will see more than the sin—he will see the whole person and all the circumstances that led this person to the adultery—and he will understand.

Madame Bovary is good fiction. Through it I experience adultery. Through it I come to understand. Flaubert gives me a front row seat to Emma's life. I see her as a young, beautiful, unmarried woman who has romantic notions about love and marriage. (Ironically, she got these notions from reading bad fiction and not being wise enough to recognize that it was bad fiction.) I watch as she marries a country doctor and I feel the hopes and dreams she has for the future. When reality sets in I experience the disillusionment that her simple life and her good but dull-witted husband bring. When she meets Léon, a man who will become one of her lovers in the future, I feel the feelings of excitement and release she feels because I have also felt her feelings of boredom and repression. I understand the temptation she feels to commit adultery.

Let me stop here to say that I already know that if Emma gives in

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to this temptation, it will lead to trouble in her life. But the novel is not trying to teach me a lesson. It seeks experience (truth). Because of Flaubert's skill as an artist, Emma is a human being, and her situation is as real as any situation I've ever been in in my life. Because of Flaubert's skill, at this point in the book I can empathize with Emma's disillusionment and boredom. This empathy helps me to understand her temptation as she feels it; but because I am outside of her life, I can see it more clearly for what it is.

Emma temporarily wins the battle with this temptation, but she lacks the wisdom that would allow the victory to bring her peace of mind and self-respect. Instead, she feels guilt for what she sees as her weakness of not being able to give herself to Léon. This is an absurd emotion to feel, but she felt it and because of Flaubert's skill as a writer I felt her guilt and understood it even though I reject her reasons for feeling it.

Emma meets another stranger, Rudolphe, with whom she does have an affair. The affair adds excitement to her life as she is finally able to realize her romantic fantasies. I feel her excitement too and feel the relief she feels in escaping her dull husband and dull life. But I also experience the lies she tells her husband; I feel the neglect she gives her daughter; I experience her loss of self-respect as she knowingly lies to herself. I feel disillusionment as the excitement of the affair wears off and, finally, the dark feelings of being used when Emma's lover dumps her, feigning repentance when really he is just tired of her. I understand when Emma stands in the window ready to leap to her death even though I am aware that her own stupidity and selfish desires brought her there. I feel the irony, as Charles, Emma's husband, unwittingly stops her from jumping to her death.

I thrill with Emma when she meets Léon again, the one who can truly give her romance and fantasy she wants, and this time gives herself to him without reservation. I feel the excitement of the letters they write to each other, the secret rendezvous they have. I experience the sticky web of lies she constructs to deceive her husband and the dark uneasiness brought on by the debt she incurs for clothes and jewels to keep the affair exciting. I reject what she is doing (as does

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any wise reader), but all the while I understand why she is doing what she is doing.

When the debts come due, when the web of lies begins to tear, and when she grows tired of Léon, I feel the same sickness and despair Emma does. I am not puzzled, as is everyone else in her community, when Emma eats the arsenic and dies a slow, agonizing death. I don't ask why Emma didn't understand that God loved her and that she could repent and salvage her life. Why? Thanks to Flaubert's skill, I *felt* the despair Emma felt and understood the course of action she took. In addition to the despair, I am also able to pity Charles for being too stupid to discover Emma's affairs while they were going on (and to understand why they began in the first place) and then too weak to deal with them when he did find out. I pity Berthe, their young daughter, who, because of her mother's selfishness and her father's weakness (he dies soon after Emma), is going to have a very difficult life. I find myself wishing that Berthe could read *Madame Bovary*, or a book like it, and experience what her mother experienced. By applying knowledge to that experience, she might escape her mother's fate.

When I turn the last page of *Madame Bovary*, I have completed an experience. I knew adultery was destructive before I started reading the book, but now I understand it as I have never understood it before. I suffered Emma's sins, Charles's despair, Berthe's loneliness. The novel has given me experience. The novel has given me truth.

What makes *Madame Bovary* even more effective is that it was not written to teach me a lesson about the horrors of adultery. Gustave Flaubert, by most Christian standards, was an unrepentant, sexually immoral man. He had no motive to manipulate the characters or tell just half of a story to make sure his readers understood that adultery is bad. Flaubert had no lesson to teach; he was only concerned with life and the art of recording life. He gave Emma every chance to be happy in her "sins," but in the end she wasn't. Flaubert wasn't trying to teach a lesson; he was only recording what was.

This novel is unhampered by the weaknesses inherent in almost all "true" stories: details haven't been forgotten or exaggerated—all

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the details are Flaubert's creation based upon his observations; anyone who is a skilled reader will most likely agree that Flaubert told the whole story (the fact that *Madame Bovary* has survived the test of time supports this), not just the part needed to make us believe like him; the same test of time indicates that *Madame Bovary* is not a lie.

What we have in the experience of *Madame Bovary* is truth about adultery in a way no "true story" could ever give. Christ compassionately forgave the woman taken in adultery; my experience with *Madame Bovary* helps me understand why. All good fiction does this same thing whether it be about charity, as in *The Grapes of Wrath*, pride, as in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, power, as in *Macbeth*. Whereas sermons and true stories talk about life, good fiction is life refined down to its essence. Truth that took me only four hours to absorb took Emma a lifetime. God has given me my life to live, to experience truth. God has also created great creative writers, who, if I'm willing, will expand my own experience to the nth power. I'll always be willing to sit through a good sermon and talk *about* the truth. But I'm even more willing to read good fiction and *experience* the truth first hand.

To that editor who said, "We don't need fiction when we have true stories," you are wrong. Sermons and their accompanying "true" stories (and vice versa) have their place and play an important part in imparting knowledge; but I think that Mormons who grow up on a diet comprised of nothing else, when they die and apply for a position in the Kingdom of Heaven, will be like many college graduates who, when looking for a job, are told by prospective employers that they have knowledge but little or no experience. Jesus is our savior and judge because of his experience. He had all knowledge before he came to earth. What he gained on earth—what he gained in the Garden of Gethsemane—was the experience that made his exaltation complete.



James Freeman

The Valley of Bones

Patty Redd Kennington

In the fall of the year 1917 Leah Kerling turned nine. Her brindle cow Linda had just died and she was responsible for getting the body dragged to the draw where from time beyond, dead animals had been dragged. There was a dead wagon and a rendering plant in those days, but it was too far away and Leah's family didn't have a telephone.

It was south of Vale, Oregon. The Kerlings had a dairy, as most everyone did. Leah's four older brothers were bucking hay and said they were too busy. Finally, over noon dinner, Leah promised them each a gooseberry pie if they'd load Linda up and take her down. They liked gooseberry pie and rarely got any. They said yes.

Next morning after milking they tied Linda with a rope to the wagon axle, hitched up Betty and Lou, and they all rode down to the animal graveyard. Leah had been there only once, when she was younger, and kept her face covered the whole time. She was nine and in shock over Linda, who had been a friend, and she wanted to say goodbye, so she went. She sat behind the driver's seat, on the bed of the wagon overlooking Linda, who, although stiff and glassy-eyed, still might value her presence and comfort among her brothers whose sense of occasion tended more toward vulgarity and hilarity. Her brothers, true to form, forgot the solemnity of the occasion and were telling tales of the ghosts of animals whose bones lay in the draw.

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PATTY REDD KENNINGTON

"You remember TDC," said Ben, who was driving. He was seventeen and hoped the war wouldn't end before he got there.

"That Darn Cow? The one Father beat to death?" said Henry, seated beside Leah on the wagon bed.

Josh was fifteen, Ben's sidekick, with a laugh like a screech owl. "She kept kicking him in the shin, even with the hobble on. He beat her with a crowbar. She went down like a sack of oats."

Leah sat watching over Linda, imagining that the tawny-colored cow was just walking along behind, switching her tail from side to side, calling out greetings, ignoring that the dead carcass heaved and scraped with the bends and bumps in the road. Linda's coat was dusty, dry like old untanned leather, and the heavy sound of dragging scraped Leah's ears.

"It wasn't a crowbar, it was a fence post," said Ben, yanking on the reins, looking back once to see if the load was still tied on behind. "I was there." He quickly glanced back at Leah. Leah the tender-hearted, who loved animals as if they were sisters. Leah's hands, cold in the bright sunshine, were under her chin, her eyes were round and unblinking, and her shoulders hunched under her gingham blouse and coveralls. She wore the grim, determined look she had inherited from her mother.

"Must have hit her spine just right," said Teddy.

Josh added, "He'd beaten her before, heaven knows. But she never died then."

"Yeah, but this time," said Ben, "it was revenge she died of. In spite of all the shin kicks, she was his best milker. Father wanted a bull, but all she calved was heifers."

"Never knew a dairyman to complain of that before," said Henry, tickling Leah with a piece of sagebrush. Leah didn't notice at first, but when she did she caught the sagebrush in her hand and broke it. Henry tossed the rest of it over the side of the wagon where it blew away in the dust. Leah clutched her part of the sagebrush to her face and breathed its familiar scent.

"So he had her matched up with some special brute belonging to Simmons," Ben was saying, "and she was going to have a bull this

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time. Extra special. He even paid for the service. He was drying her up for calving when she kicked him."

"And he broke her neck! He got her throat slit in time but the butcher said she clotted up too fast to cut up. See, it was revenge."

"Now Father don't milk in the evenings but he hears her belling off down by the draw. She's laughing at him."

Leah shuddered, glad her brindle cow hadn't had her throat cut. She couldn't have stood to see blood draining out. She could watch pigs being hung up and butchered and grown sheep and cull cows but not lambs and not friends like Linda. Once she came upon Father with a lamb with a broken foot, collapsing on the ground, white wool and black face and red blood, and the knife in his hand. She ran around the barn and threw up in the pigweed.

Father hated to waste good meat, but when he came in from the fields that day and found Leah clinging to Linda's ears while the cow moaned her last, bearing the pain of her twisted insides that had brought her down and killed her, he said Linda's sickness probably infected the meat and that they wouldn't butcher her.

"She ought to have paid for kicking," Henry said. He pulled up his pant leg and showed Leah a scar. "She did that to me."

"She didn't do that to you," said Josh. "I did that to you with my hoe when you wouldn't do your corn rows."

"You just swung too far," said Teddy.

"No, I meant to give him a scar," said Josh, "and don't you mistake me."

"Look, here we are," said Henry. "The valley of dry bones, quoth he."

They were coming around a low bluff. The heat was oppressive, the brown sugar earth dry and fine. Leah saw scattered bones among the boulders and potato-shaped rocks. It shocked her to see the quantity of bones. So many bones—a giant's pick-up-sticks game. Her brothers gathered multitudes of sticks, and then scraped and polished them to play pick-up-sticks on the kitchen table. Pick up sticks—they fought and hollered over them, as if they were treasures. They sweated and concentrated and maneuvered and bullied about

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sticks! Until one of them, Teddy, grew exasperated and flipped one or two of them end over end across the table flying onto the floor, and suddenly all the sticks were flying, the air full of them, until they were scattered around the kitchen and Mother directed sternly that they be taken outdoors and burned.

Piles and piles of jumbled bones, some white, some blackened red, some with scraps of hairy hide clinging to them. Some chewed on for the marrow, some still attached in skeletons, some pushed aside to make room for the new.

Leah steadied herself with a hand on Linda's dry shoulder as she clambered off the wagon. "Look, there's Butch, the dog," Josh said, pointing. "We just brought him here in June. The birds have been busy."

"There's TDC," said Ben. "We put her up on the rise so she could see better."

"That's not TDC," said Teddy. "That's Ruby."

"Hell dammer."

"Del hammer, stupid, a lady is with us."

"Did Father beat Ruby to death?" asked Leah in a stoic cracking voice, blowing dust off her lips, wiping her hands on her coveralls, the cruelty of her brothers' revelations making her bold.

"No, she died of old age cussedness. You remember? She kept opening the gate. Father kept her out of niceness because Mother raised her from a calf. Mother's last calf before she quit raising calves, so she could raise babies." It was part of the Kerling oral history.

Ben and Henry were untying Linda. To Leah, Linda was finally starting to look dead, bloating stiffly, covered with dust and dirt. The trip down the dirt road hadn't helped much. Leah sneezed. Her nose was starting to run. Teddy handed her his bandanna and patted her awkwardly on the back.

Although she had already cried her eyes out, Leah, with her nose running and a bandanna in her hand, and Teddy's unexpected sympathy, began to cry again. Her brothers watched as she wept, sweat trickling furrows in the dust covering them. Josh cleared his throat. "I think it's appropriate I should say something, since I'll most likely

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be bishop next after Bishop Dykes drops in the traces," he said. "What was it he said at Brother Tewkes's funeral last Sunday?"

"You weren't there. I'll say it." Henry folded his hands behind his back, stood astride as if he were in suit and tie, and put his chin up to avoid emotion, as Bishop Dykes was well known to do. Henry liked funerals and attended them whenever he could. He cleared his throat and opened his mouth. But for a moment nothing came out. Then, instead of speaking, he began to sing. "And should we die before our journey's through, happy day, all is well." His voice was strong and clear. "We then are free from toil and sorrow too, with the just we shall dwell...."

Leah clutched her hands to her aching heart. She was crying freely now, the ancestral song echoing, cathartic, about the animal graveyard.

Everyone joined in on the chorus, singing, "All is well! All is well!" until the notes reverberated round about and the bones nearly rattled. Leah dabbed her eyes, coughed twice, and felt spent and sorry, not at all as relieved as she ought to have felt. The choking lodged in her throat, however, and she didn't feel like giving back the bandanna, so she kept it and worried that perhaps she had loved Linda too much, as her mother had said. Then Henry, still in imagined suit and tie, shook hands all around. Time to leave death in the graveyard.

They got back in the wagon and headed home. Leah's throat ached for two days after.

It took forever to pick the gooseberries. She wore old leather gloves but still got scratches here and there. She didn't care, though. It seemed a penance for caring too much about a brindle cow whose insides weren't right. School started which meant that the worst of the dusty hot work was over, the bucking of bales and itching straw inside your shirt and following the last cow along the path toward the barn in the afternoon at milking time before finally the rains would come and settle the dust.

On the way home from school Leah usually held her little sister Louisa's hand while the boys blazed the trail out in front, at least in

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their imaginations. More often they just raised dust, or if it was raining, they excavated puddles to discover the depth and muddiness thereof. Ben might have gotten out of school at age seventeen, but Mother said he had to graduate before he could join the army. He grumbled and growled and obeyed.

In the evening, Mother said a family prayer. She prayed for a speedy end to the war, which she always did, but lately her prayers had taken on more intensity. Her oldest boy was getting big and she didn't want him getting killed in some foreign place. Father in Heaven ought to be putting a stop to it by now. Hadn't enough wicked people been killed? Hadn't enough decent people been killed? Hadn't the devil gotten his due yet? On like that.

The shifting, kneeling children were afraid she'd break down into sobs, but then she took a deep breath and started on another subject. She always tried to lighten up towards the end, to let God know they weren't truly as disappointed with him as she made it sound. "We realize it's wartime," she said. "And we've got more than most people. Especially all those families over in Europe who have been bombed on and lost their fathers."

Leah looked up to make sure her father wasn't lost. He wasn't. He winked.

Mother was saying, "We have holidays coming up and we'd like to help others less fortunate than ourselves by sharing with them."

There was no shuffling now, everyone was still. Whenever Mother mentioned sharing with others less fortunate it meant the "spirit of sacrifice," or in other words, doing without.

"Especially our neighbor, poor Sister Tewkes," she said. "You don't even have to be in a war to lose your husband. Now that her husband is gone she's going to need a lot of help, especially a new stove, and we're the neighbors with the proper spirit of sacrifice that she can depend on."

There were rumors Sister Tewkes had a sack of confederate money somewhere, but Henry said it wouldn't be worth anything, since it was probably paper, not gold, so she couldn't buy herself a new stove. Besides, if they had money, don't you think Brother Tewkes would

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have spent a little of it on himself by now? Brother Tewkes, whose habits included buying on credit until credit was exhausted and who had sold the stack of firewood his home teachers had kindly cut for him and his wife when he mysteriously came down with a back ailment and the Relief Society sisters brought in all that food. The money he got for the wood went, it was rumored, to a game of blackjack in Elko when he was supposedly getting his ailing back fixed good as new. Brother Tewkes who was the first in line at ward potluck dinners and who wouldn't go home teaching. Rumor was that he paid tithing on credit. So said the Sunday School teacher whose husband was the ward clerk. Maybe it was really Brother Tewkes who had the spirit of sacrifice and let the pulley fall on himself by accident, so he could find out what credit he'd stored up in heaven, gaining a few blessings for himself by sparing his wife and the bishop the burden of his presence any longer.

The kids were walking home from school.

Up ahead Ben was saying, "Miss Teasdale brought the newspaper to school today. It said they need animal bones for the war effort."

"It what?"

They were dancing along, backlit by the autumn sun. Leah and Louisa plodded forward in unlovely sack dresses.

"Bones. They said they'd have a bone pickup place somewhere. We could sell bones. Probably in Boise."

"Bones," said Josh. "What would they want with bones?"

"Probably to grind up to powder," said Teddy. "Maybe they use it for bombs."

"Gunpowder?"

"Bonemeal! Maybe they're going to raise millions of pigs for starving Frenchmen."

"Who cares what it's for? They said they'd pay."

"Money? They'd pay money for bones?"

As if on a gunshot, they all took off running, leaving Louisa and Leah in the dust.

They told Mother they'd help poor Widow Tewkes by piling up the bones of dead animals on the wagon and taking them to Boise.

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Leah asked to come, because she'd never been to Boise before. They told her she'd have to help load bones on the wagon.

The hay was all in the day they went down. It was somber, as it had been on the day of the brindle cow's funeral, but it wasn't dry. The heavens hung low and it was raining. They all wore hats, water dripping the brims down. Mud was running into the bottom of the draw. The trip didn't seem as long this time, perhaps because Leah was older and wiser and had experienced death. She recalled the aching of her throat.

Leah found small clean bones and one by one stuck them into the bucket she carried with her. She could hear her brothers, up on the rise, throwing down bones. They echoed and bounced into the wagon. She was trying to avoid where Linda had been dragged but, confused by the aspect of piles of bones scattered over rocks under a weeping sky, came upon her anyway.

Leah stared at Linda. She was flattened out somehow, her hide streaked grayish brown and mummified, with rivulets of dirty water winding along the contours of her carcass. It wasn't the animal Leah remembered. She stood, trying to make out the face and eyes and the long flossy tail she had spent time combing out when she ought to have been feeding the baby calves, but it was impossible. She adjusted her hat to keep water from running down her neck and began picking up bones again.

It was a long drive to Boise, Ben driving, Joshua keeping company, and Leah in the back to make sure no bones fell off. The whole way, Joshua asked questions that nobody knew the answer to.

"What do you think we'll get for these? How much does a stove for Widow Tewkes cost? Maybe if we just got her a little stove. Are you okay back there?"

Leah shifted around among the bones. Joshua was probably more concerned with the possibility of her knocking a bone off the wagon than herself falling off. She said faintly, "I'm okay." Ben threw her an apple, but it didn't taste so good, with dripping bones all around her.

"We didn't get half the bones," shouted Ben. "We didn't get a third

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of the bones. There's tons of bones back there still. We'll get enough to get a stove and something for ourselves."

This was what Joshua wanted to hear. He sighed happily and didn't talk anymore for awhile.

When they got to Boise, Ben drove down State Street and along where rich folks built mansions for themselves and tall trees grew, trees other than willow and cottonwood. He told Leah people who lived in mansions like that had servants who were better off than the richest farmers in Vale. Leah wished she was a servant to rich folks in Boise so she could have a new dress. Not that she'd ever considered getting anything new; unlike Joshua, the thought hadn't occurred to her that these bones could bring them anything but practical items like barbed wire and ax heads.

They'd brought their lunches along, thick slabs of bread and butter with jam, cheese, apples, cold chicken. First they bought some sewing things for Mother, then farm things for Father. Then they went to the depot to dump off bones.

There was a pile of a million bones already. Josh was afraid they wouldn't want anymore. The man who weighed them, who wore a striped shirt and suspenders and a dripping hat, said not to worry, he'd take all they had. Ben made sure he put the money in his own pocket. He bought a bag of lemon drops, but that was all, and wouldn't even open it until they got home, despite Joshua's pleadings and threatenings.

It took four more trips to get all of the bones out of the draw and up to Boise. Leah didn't go again. Mother wasn't so well after the last baby and she needed Leah to help her. On the last trip back the brothers brought a little black cast-iron stove with ceramic knobs.

When the Kerlings took the stove over to Widow Tewkes, she sat down on her worn-out love seat and stared at it like she'd never seen a stove before. Then the boys stoked it for her with wood they'd sawed for her, and she made them all some watery tea on it. It was almost Christmas time and the stove grew hot. The Kerling boys gathered around it, warming their hands.

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The week before Christmas Leah went to sleep against the sound of the treadle machine. Mother sewed most of the Christmas presents, as did most other people's mothers, unless their fathers made them things out of wood and bits of metal. The creak and treadle was comforting since Leah had asked for a real grown-up jacket of wool worsted like one she saw in Boise. There was also a silver locket she wanted that opened to put pictures in. She'd probably get the jacket.

One night she awoke and the treadle was silent. She heard Joshua's screech-owl shriek. Lying wide awake as Louisa snored beside her, Leah wondered if a snake had crawled in bed with him like once before, but snakes weren't out in cold weather. The shriek didn't seem to be coming from the boys' room, anyway. There was what sounded like giggling. Leah got out of bed and felt her way down the stairs.

They had a lamp on in the kitchen. Just dim enough to see by, to count treasure by. It was Joshua and Ben.

When Leah came into the circle of light Ben nudged Josh and said, "What did I tell you, you'd wake up somebody? You brought Teddy down last night with your noise. I expect he'll show up here too, any minute. By the time Christmas gets here it won't be any surprise."

"Aw, it's just her," said Joshua. "She won't tell. Will you?"

Leah shook her head. She sat across from them, watching as a shiny model train engine passed round and round the kitchen table. There were little trees and bushes and painted wooden blocks to look like houses and a train station.

"It's for Mahonri, really," said Ben, as he steered the locomotive around. Mahonri, who was four, liked anything with wheels on it. Leah didn't believe she knew a male who didn't like seeing something round and rolling, the faster the better. The boys worked in tandem, passing the train from one piece of track to another as if they'd done this before. They looked up at her from time to time, to check her reaction, raising their eyebrows when she smiled and tried to keep from laughing.

The train chugged to a halt so Joshua could rummage in a box behind him. "We hid all this stuff at Simmons's," he said. "We got it out last night. Look what we have for Louisa."

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It was a sweet, soft doll that said Mama. Its blue crystal eyes opened and closed. Leah held out her arms for it and hugged it to her like Mother did with her real baby. It was like silk and satin, like a kitten but better. She gave it back reluctantly.

"And this is for Teddy." Joshua got out a striped vest, the kind Mother couldn't make and Teddy coveted. For Henry, a baseball glove and a real leather ball. For Mother, a porcelain cooking pot, and for Father, a new grinder. They wouldn't show Leah what they got for her, although they told her it was a new pair of leather gloves to pick gooseberries in. Long up the wrists and arms, to keep her from getting scratches. They were so detailed in their description that she wondered if she'd told them enough times what she wanted before they had money to buy it with. "That locket," she said quietly, but when they didn't look up she realized she hadn't said anything at all.

"Is this all from the bones?" she asked, out loud.

They nodded, their eyebrows arched, their faces conspiratorial, the shadows of the lamp showing them dear and foolish.

In time the war ended without Ben's help, and Mother prayed thanks. She died before the next war began, so she didn't see one of her other sons die there, or Father marry a woman with six children. Four of the six were girls, sisters Leah thought she wanted. Leah found she didn't mind so much, after all, working outside alongside her brothers. Her brothers teased and didn't like babies or kittens or satin dolls, but they watched over her. They named each new calf Linda the second and Linda the third and Linda the seventeenth until she told them to stop. She hoped Mother would be a proud angel in heaven, looking down and seeing the spirit of sacrifice they all were practicing, with more brothers and sisters to share with. When Leah cried now, it wasn't over dead animals but dead people and the fact that she would never, in her life, have a new dress.

Mother did see her first two grandchildren, though, and that Christmas of the bones she saw Leah wearing a wool worsted jacket and around her neck a silver chain with a miniature lock and key her brothers had bought. They explained as they gave it to her, "This is how you *lock* it!" and although she always wore it, she was never able

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to tell them that a locket was a hinged pendant you put pictures in, because it no longer mattered.



Chapter 1

from

House on the Sound

Marilyn McMeen Brown

My father was a little man who liked peace. He had a knot of blond hair on a cowlick that sat up on his head. He spit sometimes and rubbed his hands on his neck while he read the newspapers about the Japanese. He was preoccupied.

This morning on the way to the navy yard where he drew ships for the war, I told him I needed to throw up. He didn't hear me or he didn't believe me. He kept driving the Chevrolet until we reached the fence. Then he let me get out while he went to the drafting building. While he was gone I got out and walked to the fence. Inside were antiaircraft guns. Barely visible behind the guns was a girl with gold hair. She bent over and then stood up. Then she disappeared again. I ducked to see her. She was putting on a red coat with huge pockets bulging with papers, and she wrapped a black scarf around her head.

I didn't throw up. I walked back to the car. "What's she doing?" I asked my mother. My sister Elaine crawled over the seat to look and the baby started to cry.

"I don't know."

Winner of both BYU's first Mayhew Prize and the first novel award from Association of Mormon Letters, Marilyn McMeen Brown is the first prize winner of the 1991 Utah State Fine Arts Novel Award for *Road to Covered Bridge*. *House on the Sound*, about her experiences during World War II, won a fine arts honorable mention in 1989. Dividing the *Earthkeepers*, Covenant Books recently published *Thorns of the Sun*, and in 1993 will publish the sequel, *Shadows of Angels*. Living in Hobble Creek Canyon, Springville, Utah, she and her husband are the parents and grandparents of six children and six grandchildren.

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"What's the girl doing?" I asked my father when he returned with blueprints in his arms.

"She cleans here."

"She cleans?"

"I think she lives in the house on the edge of our gully."

"Maybe she would clean for us," my mother said, hushing the baby.

"I told you Grandpa and Grandma would come when our house is built," my father said.

My mother was quiet. We stopped at the gas station. By the time we began to climb the hill, there she was.

"Stop and give her a ride," I said.

But my father said "No."

We passed her on the road, smothering her with dust.

"I have to throw up again," I said. "This time for real."

"Didn't you throw up at the navy yard?" my father said.

"No. I tried to," I said.

My father stopped by the road. I got out and stood behind a mound of ragweed. I turned my head and saw her face. The bright hair, bunched under the black scarf, curled down over her eyebrows and almost hid her light-colored eyes. Her cheeks were almost white, hanging on high thin bones. Her mouth was a circle with a swollen bottom lip. I got only a short look. When she saw me she covered the bottom of her face with the black scarf. I was getting cold. I pretended to throw up. Then I hurried into the car so we could start up before she reached us on the road. I sat inside the car looking out the window and thinking that when we finished building our house on the hill and moved in, we would know who she was and I would have to apologize that my father did not give her a ride to the top of the hill.

When we reached the skeleton house my father got out. He walked along the boards with a measuring tape that clicked and talked to me and my sister Elaine about the woods. He told us to stay close by while he built the new house. There was a war in the world. We weren't safe anywhere. But he would make these walls tight.

He kept a pencil and a hammer and nails in the bulging pockets of a khaki canvas apron he tied around his waist. He lined the nails

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up in his mouth like spiked teeth and spit them out in his hand. He held the nail and pounded and all across the hill that looked over the Sound we could hear echoing back to us: *tap, tap, tap*. My mother stood against the sun coming at us from across the water and blazing behind her until all we saw of her was a silhouette with my baby sister whimpering in her arms. Elaine hung on to her dress. There seemed to be no other sounds in this quiet world, except the hum of a ramshackle truck grinding up the hill. Inside the truck I thought I saw two people, one wearing a black scarf, and a flash of red.

When the truck disappeared into the woods, I hid behind the lumber until my father turned his back. Then I ran toward the dark house hidden behind the trees. In front of the peeling walls on packed dirt stood two rusted trucks and an old car without wheels. By the side of the car in front of the stoop was a clothesline. A woman was pinning up diapers on the clothesline. Her hair was tied up in a neat knot under a little red bandanna slipping down to her eyes. She was chewing on three clothespins. Her blue apron was dusty with old flour. I thought she was the mother. And sitting on the stoop was a girl my age with bony knees and patent leather shoes. With only one hand she was gripping a baby, and with the other holding up her long chin, resting her elbows on her knees. Alongside her pale cheeks hung two big plumes of straw-colored hair looking matted like two horse's tails. She was staring and holding onto the baby's wrist, not paying any attention to his tugging and tugging to get free.

They saw me as soon as I saw them. I didn't say hello. I stood there stuck in my heavy shoes.

"Hello there." The mother took the last clothespin out of her mouth and clamped the middle of a quilt to the line. She turned her head and smiled while she dipped down to pick up the basket. "Where do you live?" She stood with the big basket against her knees. "You must be about the same age as Flora." She paused waiting to see if I'd say anything. "You from that family building the new house on the corner of Audrey Avenue?"

I nodded. I opened my mouth but nothing came out. I twisted the button on my sweater.

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"What's your name?"

"Melinda Ann Callister, but everyone calls me Annie."

"Well, I'm Mrs. Barbar. This is Flora. We're glad to know you."

She turned to the stoop and to the girl with the floppy hair—Flora, who was staring at me out of watery eyes.

"You're welcome to come and play with Flora any time."

"Do you know any of the people who live around here?" I asked.

"No," Flora said.

When the mother went into the house, the baby grabbed her legs. "Nicholas, let go now," she said. She opened the door and disappeared into the blackness. The screen door squawked and slapped the door frame. Flora let go of the baby and he climbed up to the door and stood peering inside, his fat white hands against the shadowy screen. Flora sat still on the stoop and looked right through my head, right up the road, down across Audrey Avenue to Puget Sound.

Without saying anything, she got up from the stoop. From behind the house a big copper-colored dog appeared. She leaned down to pull its ears and say, "Webster, where have you been?" The dog rubbed against her legs. He was so big he could have pushed her over. She did a side step until she got her feet back under her, all the time her eyes fastened on me.

Finally, she said, "Webster is a cross between a German shepherd and an Irish setter."

For a moment there was profound silence. I looked at the dog. Flora was still watching me. "Do you want to see something?"

I nodded.

She turned her back to me. "Don't step in the puddles."

In the narrow, dark passageway between the house and the nearest truck stood pools with rainbows of oil. Trees leaned against the walls of the house blocking out the sun. Flora stretched over the puddles in her bright shoes, while I kept splashing at the edges. In the back yard I saw cotton mattress stuffing hiding old, green copper washing machines. A couple of cars thrust their bones up through the snowy white, the hoods angled like folded paper planes. On the back of the

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house a tired wooden porch sagged around a new unpainted pine door taut with a silver patch of screen.

The dog bobbed at Flora's heels to the rhythm of his wheeze. I followed Webster. Flora led us through the backyard through the maze of machinery and into the woods. The foliage overhead did not let any light shine through to the black ground shaggy with vines and ferns. Far ahead through the heavy trees, I could see sunlight. Flora followed the sunlight. At the edge of the woods she stopped beside a huge tree. She stood under the tree and pulled Webster's ears. He jumped up beside her, slapping his large paws against her loose cotton blouse. She didn't notice him. She was looking straight up into the tree, into the sun striking down through the leaves into her eyes, at a slab of wood cradled in the jagged crannies of the branches.

"See that?" she said. "Do you want to see something?"

I didn't say anything. I looked up into the tree. From below, the platform hung like the seat of a swing out of place in the sky.

"Come on," she said.

I stood and watched while she pulled the vine down from the first branches and pushed off her patent leather shoes. "You have to take off your shoes." Still holding to the vine she pulled off her blue wool stockings.

I sat down in the spongy undergrowth and untied my shoelaces. I pulled off my big brown oxfords and pushed down my stockings spattered with black oil. By now Flora was standing with both feet in the vines, crawling up the shaggy mulch of the huge tree. All I could see were her long white legs under the faded plaid wool skirt. When she reached a safe landing in the tree she sat and dangled her feet. "That is the hardest part," she said. I looked up at the long soles of her bare feet, her little toes like white beads. "The vines won't break. We climb it all the time. Come on."

And then I heard somebody shoot a gun into the leaves.

I was sure it was a gun. It sounded like buckshot tearing up the bark of the tree. That morning when I came I could taste something like burned butter on the back of my tongue. Now the taste turned

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sour and this time I thought for sure I was going to throw up. But I hadn't thrown up in Bremerton, Washington, yet, though I had wanted to many times.

Flora popped her head over the side of the leaves. "Hurry," she said. "You want to be shot at?"

I was shaking. I didn't want to climb this tree. But now I could see it was the best choice.

"Come on, Annie," she said. "They're shooting at ground squirrels. It's safe up here."

I was sure the vines would break. The light hurt my eyes.

"Are you coming?"

I wasn't.

"Come on."

I looked down. I was dizzy. Her shiny shoes and my oxfords swam below me like big fish in the dark while her blue socks pulled inside out bloomed in the leaves. Looking down I put one foot in the vine. Then the other. When I got both feet into the vines, I curled the leathery bark under my toes. I closed my eyes and hugged flat against the tree, surprised I was doing it. I reached for a vine above me and found my toes cradled in another loop. It was slow work and with my eyes shut so tight I wasn't doing very well. But in a few moments I looked up and Flora's feet were in front of my nose.

"That's good." She lay on her stomach in a cradle of branches and reached for my hands. "They stopped shooting."

I took her hand. It was soft and tight. She pulled me, pulled me, and I reached up into the dust and bark in the shallow basin where the huge wings of branches began.

"It's easy now," she said. When she let go of my hand I trembled. I was still afraid of the gun and out of breath from running away.

Above us the limbs of the tree scattered the light. The hollow cavern was almost empty of leaves and sound except for the flap of a bird's wings somewhere high. I looked back and saw the roof of Flora's old, green house where we had just been.

"Come on," she said again.

Above me, Flora was on a rough limb that rose into an angle. She

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pulled herself up, pulled her feet to the surface and stood leaning over the stout limb, her hands swinging, touching only fingers to the bark as she began to walk up into the sky.

I crawled into the hollow of the tree and gathered my legs under me. My heart was pounding.

"Come on," Flora said.

I didn't go. I sat looking up at Flora, at her shadow against the light glittering through the leaves. She didn't look like the same girl I had just seen on the stoop with the baby. "Are you coming?" She had stopped climbing. She was looking down at me, the mass of hair hiding her eyes. Then she turned back to the tree. "This is the stairs. It's easy to climb the stairs."

I crawled up to the stairs and put my hands on the limb.

"This isn't a tree," Flora said. "It's a house."

I pushed with my feet and crawled up onto the limb. For a moment I lay there with my cheek against the bark. It was cold, cold wood.

"That's the stairs to the upstairs."

It took me a long time to climb the stairs on my hands and knees.

"This is the window." Flora had reached the pad of wood high above us. She pulled herself up into the high branches, pulled herself up on the slab of wood. She stood on it and I couldn't see very well. "The mother bird isn't here," she called down.

I was concentrating on the direction of the stairs, but I could see far above us the dark, matted bramble of a bird's nest, a shadow against the sun and leaves. Flora hauled herself up high enough to study whatever was in the nest.

"Shhh . . ." She put her fingers to her mouth.

She turned around and sat down on the slab, dangling her feet over the edge, looking east toward the Sound.

"You can see the navy yard from here."

Every day my father rode his bicycle to the navy yard from our rented house near our friends on Gregory Street. I couldn't see Gregory Street from here. I couldn't see the foundation of the new house, or my father. I thought about my father and mother and sister. They didn't know where I was.

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"Come on. You can't see the navy yard unless you come all the way up to the window. You can see ships going in and coming out of the Sound."

I kept inching along the wood, growing more anxious now, my chin slipping along the cold bark.

"Come on."

"I'm coming," I said.

I pulled myself up to the platform. My legs hung below me. It took all the energy I had to lift them up, to get my knees on that platform and pull myself across to Flora. When I sat beside her I sank back, lightheaded, clinging to the branches. It was lard I tasted this time. Below me was the world as far as I could see it—more than we could see from Audrey Avenue. More than I had ever seen.

I saw the road. The same road where I had seen the girl in a black scarf and a red coat.

Flora was pointing down to the water. "There's the ferry, the *Kalakala*," she said. It moved like a water beetle, its wake as straight as though it had been drawn with my father's pencil in the hammered blue. The *bwaw* of the foghorn echoed up to us with the faraway sound of pounding nails. "And Port Orchard. And off in that direction is Seattle." Its jagged buildings looked like teeth. And below us were the acres of steel in the navy yard. I could see the fence where I stood this morning trying to throw up while my father went into the drafting building to pick up some plans.

"The ships in the navy yard go out to sea," Flora said.

I squinted at the shapes of sidewalks and piers. Individual boats and ships stood in the water side by side for miles.

"They go out to the ocean to fight the war," Flora said. "Does your father fight in the war?"

I shook my head. "No," I began. "He draws parts for ships."

Flora was pointing to the flags on the *U.S.S. Holmes*.

"Do you have a sister who walks up the hill in a red coat?" I asked.

"Who, Sarah?" Flora said. She looked at me at an angle. There was something different in her voice. "She's not my sister."

And then I heard the shots tearing up the leaves.

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"Who shoots ground squirrels over here?" I asked.

"Regi and Creel," Flora said.

"Who are Regi and Creel?" I asked.

But she didn't answer. She was quiet for a long time.

"Does Sarah scrub at the navy yard?" I asked her.

I don't know how long we sat there staring at the ships in silence. It seemed like another long time. She didn't answer my question about Sarah.

Flora looked at me at an angle.

"How did you know about Sarah?" she said.

"I saw someone walking up the hill from the navy yard."

"Sarah." She became quiet.

"She has big pockets full of paper?"

Flora didn't say another word.

"I wanted my father to give her a ride," I said. "But he is very shy."

Flora turned away. "Never mind," she said.

I would have asked more, except for the tone in Flora's voice. "Is she . . . ?"

"Don't talk to me about Sarah," Flora snapped.

Suddenly another shattering clap broke the quiet in the woods. This time it was not on the ground. It sounded high in the leaves. Flora held tighter onto the branches. She leaned out toward Puget Sound and cocked her head as though she were listening again.

The gun boomed again, closer this time. We could hear leaves tearing.

"Somebody's shooting into the trees," Flora whispered now, her hands whiter, tightening on the branches. "Quick, duck."

The third shot terrified both of us. We ducked to get out of the way.

"It's Creel. I bet anything it's Creel."

I didn't answer her. I was flat on the platform like Flora, my chin trembling, my hands tight on the edge of the wood.

"Creel!" She screamed.

Another crack sounded.

"He probably saw us coming up here. Get down."

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I was already down as flat as I could lie. Then Flora told me to pull my feet back up on the platform and lie flat so nobody could see my feet. I hustled them out of sight and bent up double. Then out of the dense sunny sky another shot sounded from far away. Two shooters. Maybe more.

"Don't breathe. Just don't breathe," Flora whispered.

I didn't breathe. I was quiet and heard another crack and a thud like the buckshot lodging into something. Then above us we heard the sound of wings. Something large batted up against the branches above us and then slipped and fluttered and slipped back and fluttered trying to get hold on the maze of connecting limbs.

Flora turned her matted blonde pony tails and lay with her ear against the platform, her eyes squinting up into the leaves. "Oh," she said. "It can't be." She raised herself up slightly and then pulled her arm over her face as though protecting herself. I looked up. Above us a bundle of feathers slipped, dangled through the leaves.

Flora gasped. The bird was caught in the branches, its wings snapped back at an odd angle. "I hate you, Creel!"

Flora dragged herself up to the branches above us. The bird fluttered, fluttered, made long last attempts to loose itself, to climb into the nest. It never cried out. It batted its wings. I thought its wings broke. Then it let go in the leaves and died.

Flora climbed up to the bird. In the upper branches she loosened the white bird, pulled it down in a lump on the platform. It fell and then moved slightly, twitched, the last blood pumping through the wounded breast.

"I hate you, Creel," Flora said between her teeth. She loomed over the bird, stroked its feathers. The blood from the bird oozed onto the platform, and Flora, now down on her knees, tore leaves from the branches above us and pressed them around the bird until they were soaked with blood. Then she drew down more. Following her example, I tore off some leaves and laid them over the broken bloody heap. "The eggs," Flora said. "There's eggs."

Both of us laid the leaves on the body of the bird while Flora murmured softly. "I hate him. I hate him. If I had a gun I would shoot

HOUSE ON THE SOUND

him in his sleep." I sat back on the platform and clung to one of the branches nearby. I stared at Flora while I heard what she was saying. "I'm going to kill him if I have a chance, the devil." The only other person I ever heard call anybody a devil was my grandfather Callister. Sometimes if he didn't like someone he would call them a devil. "There was eggs."

The bright frightened eye of the bird stared up through the leaves. Flora touched it with a twig. She picked at it but it would not shut. We were there in the silence for a long time, for so long that I was afraid my father would be looking for me. But I didn't dare move. I was in the presence of death and I believed it was something contagious and spidery like the airways of disease. If you didn't breathe, it might sit on your cheek. It would be up to you to shake it off so that it would fly away.

Finally Flora stood on the platform. I followed her without saying anything. In the distance, closer and then farther away, a vanishing aircraft swooped over the waters. Flora reached for a branch and climbed up a few more feet into the tree. Above her was the nest. Still quiet, in the hum of the aircraft, she picked the eggs out of the nest. There were two. Before she climbed back down to the platform, she stood in the cradle of the branches, leaned back her head, and lifted one of the eggs high over her mouth. She leaned back and cracked the egg with one hand. The yellow and the transparent white fell into her mouth. She held the other egg out to me.

"Do you want one?" She said.

Now my throat felt like black grease was in it. I shook my head.

At that moment one, two, three shots echoed through the leaves. Flora dropped the other egg and scrambled to the platform again, ducking and spreading herself flat against the wood. I didn't hear the egg fall.

"Let's get out of here," Flora said. I followed her down, feeling sick.

We had not come more than a few feet below the platform when a thin voice from far away called up to the top "Flora...."

I felt sick looking down.

MARYILYN MCMEEN BROWN

"Oh gosh . . . Penny. . . ." Flora said between her teeth. "Coming!" she yelled.

"Well, come quick. Ma's mad." Below in the leaves appeared a tiny face mobbed by red frizzy curls.

"Coming, Penny!" Flora said again. "That's my sister Penny," she told me. "Do you have to go home? Or do you want to stay and play with our dolls?"

"I better go home," I said. To be friendly maybe I should have stayed, but I was still trembling. I could still feel something heavy in my stomach.

"Come on, Flora. Mother wants you back. You was supposed to be tending."

"I'm coming!" Flora called back. "Heaven's sake. Tell Mother to stop Creel shooting in the trees."

A final shot answered her.

"Creel ain't going to let nobody tell him what to do."

"Well, I ain't going nowhere in the gully until Pa takes that gun away from him. He killed the bird up here and we could get killed."

"The bird . . . ?" Penny called up. "What about the bird?"

"Wait a minute," Flora called from inside of the thick plaits of her hair. The words were muffled. She scrambled faster and faster, scooted to the center of the tree. I was so far behind I couldn't hear them anymore.

It took me a long time to test each branch, to cross over the network of limbs. When I reached the bottom of the tree Flora and Penny were gone. I stood for a long time trying to get my bearings. I knew where the sound was. I could feel the breeze that came up from the water like cold breath on my cheek.

Again I heard a shot. It seemed closer this time. The blood in my head chilled. I bent over and pulled on my oxford shoes. I picked my way through the ferns and the leaves. In the distance I thought I could see Flora's house. I skirted around the edge of it, keeping my eye on its looming shape in the trees. I heard the new screen door slam against the back door jamb. Flora and Penny were safely inside the house while I was still picking my way through the dark vines. I

HOUSE ON THE SOUND

hurried my feet, afraid something sinister and hidden would grab me. And then clap, crunch. Far down the hill behind me something large and careless was breaking through the trees. At first I thought it might be a bear. I held my breath and froze. Two creatures with large feet were crashing through the brush. I saw a man lift a gun. I saw the metal flashing in what light was left to skim down through the leaves.

"Creel!" a voice screamed. And the flashing barrel of the rifle arced through the light."

"Please, Regi. Stop him, Regi," Flora was crying from somewhere far away.

The man Regi whacked the gun down out of the other one's hands. It cracked hard and shot up the ground. I heard the shot thud into the loam.

"I'll be . . ." the man with the gun cried out. He stared at me from two twisted black eyes in his round reddened face wreathed in a frizzled coffee-colored beard. "Some kid. I almost shot some kid." His eyes widened like two white buttons sewn with black thread. The color of his face went from red to white in an instant. In that frozen second we shocked one another. I knew I was looking at Creel and he was looking at me. We were both afraid.

For a second I didn't move. I absorbed his image before I turned and leaped through the brush as though it were in flames. I never ran so fast. I passed an edge that dropped off into a black hole. My feet missed it but my heart skidded to a stop over the trees and my blood pounded in my ears. I couldn't hold it back, then. I leaned over the gully and everything inside of me came up. I gagged and gagged over the gully—a small yawning canyon as dark as pitch. I turned back and skirted the edge with fear. On my left I could hear the buzz of construction, the sound of a car on the upper road. I pushed myself up the hill, running until my breath scratched through. I ran, even though I didn't feel my legs could carry me anymore.



Quentin Webb

The Fatherly Heaven and the Motherly Earth

Harlow Söderborg Clark

It was not always so that the Fatherly Heaven and the Motherly Earth were separated. At one time she was in him, and he in her, and we in them, all of us. I do not understand it either, but that is how they rolled through vast time and space springing off children, joyous, numerous as stars.

Something happened. I do not know. A blowup? Big as the universe? Perhaps the Fatherly Heaven tired of conjugal duties, flung the Motherly Earth away. Perhaps she ran from the demands, the demands, the ever rolling and unrolling demands. Word has it one third of the bright stars rebelled against the Fatherly Heaven, drew themselves away from the Motherly Earth. Perhaps her grief was keen enough to cut her away, knock her out of orbit—keen enough even now sometimes to shake her, drench her with winds and rain, ashes, smoke, fire.

Perhaps the waters and winds and ashes, the tongues of flame come from their fighting, always and always, over the children. The children always get the worst.

And she, she got the children.

Although not yet thirty-five, Harlow Clark ran a small write-in campaign for U.S. president. He did not win, nor did he vote for himself despite the fact that a high school classmate once predicted in a story that he would be president. Now that the campaign is over, he is preparing lexico syntactical and exegetical notes for the translation department of a large corporation.

HARLOW SÖDERBORG CLARK

Or rather, she had the matter to make them flesh and blood to dwell in.

The children went to live with their mother.

They longed to visit their father. That meant leaving their flesh and blood. No retrieving. No fullness of joy without flesh to contain it and bone to bear it up.

Deadlocked. Thousands of years of children returning to visit their father. Thousands of years yearning for their mother.

The Fatherly Heaven wants the bodies. Sent down his son, their son, to bring them back, reason with the Motherly Earth, ransom the bodies, pull them from their dirt womb.

They killed him.

So they buried him in a stone womb. And darkness. Sealed with a stone. Who knows but what the Motherly Earth, holding her son crossways of her lap could only hold him a short while. She had fought and pleaded, begged for him, but not to hold him cold in a cave. Grief trembled, shook cities into the sea. That white stone she tore out of the mountain—without hands. Swore it should fill the whole of her earth, destroying.

And then she gave up the body. All bodies.

She still shakes, winds and rain, ashes, smoke, fire—cities and children and crops destroyed. It is said that the son both mourned and grieved for will wipe the tears of the parents and with those tears cleanse the Motherly Heaven and the Fatherly Earth, and lead them back into one another and us in them as well. And they in us. I do not understand this mystery. But that is how this tale has come down to me.

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Trains

I dizzied at even dirt between the ties—
the flash flash of feet on laddered earth
discovered sickness in my eyes—
and then I crossed the river, stopped midtrack
to watch the water slide beneath my feet
so long that I could not go on
and I could not go back. A hoot behind
was only Lalo's joke, but I stood
in monument until he came
to pluck my wool-spun arm and cross me
like a child just learned to walk. After that
I took the roadside's longer way despite
his whispered threats, "Coward! I will not love
a coward!"

"Then keep that love," I wish I'd said,
"for I won't cross where earth has left the tracks
to sky and sliding water. I know trains!—
how of all machines they're most like beasts,
like dragons of the soil, and how with savage
pounding feet they take
whatever's in their path. Yet I know too
how deep at night they chant and howl
of deeper things than love or life.

—Lisa Madsen de Rubilar

Lisa Madsen de Rubilar is a freelance writer currently residing in Chile with her husband and two children. She has previously published poetry in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.

Calf Joy

We loaded up the truck with kids
and headed Over West to check the cattle
and feel the evening coming on. The hills
never were so green, with paintbrush
spread out like sunset against green
instead of blue, and even sagebrush, even
juniper looking baby-green
in the last yellow light of the sun, that light
that falls direct from heaven like pure peace,
singes things to gold and pink
you can't even think about, it's so beautiful.
Wind washed in the window like water from the spring,
mussed my hair good in spite of the scarf
I held tight at my ears while the kids screamed
in back at the bad spots where tractors
got stuck last winter and spun the road full of holes.

It was Terry spotted first
away off through the fields the cattle
looking like lady-bird beetles on a lawn;
then Blake took out
across where no road ever was, gritting his teeth
like Dad would when he'd yell, 'Hang on!'
before piling into the creek with the hay load
swinging like a drunk man,
and us on top.

We slowed up when we got down near them,
and I've never seen anything like how those crazy calves
came running up to the struck just a-kicking
and jumping like they couldn't stand the joy of it.
Even the cows turned those big stupid eyes our way
and started over, bags swinging
like milk pails, mooing like anything.
Only the bull
stood all stiff in our track like a big old boulder
with eyes. I bet the rocks along the ditch
were watching us too, since they remember,
well as I, how they got harvested long before the wheat,
and left there forty years back
in those very piles.

When we got up by the cemetery
and looked east to the mountain
the town was wrapped up in that grey-blue color
that means not a soul's done a single mean thing
in the whole history of the world. I said right out loud,
"I've never been this happy," because the calf-joy
had me by the heart like a dog on a bone.

— *Lisa Madsen de Rubilar*

Pablo Campues, Saint

Pablo worked
in a match factory
in Quito

earned seventy-five centavos a day
lived in a cave he dug
in the mountain with his hands.

On Sundays, he listened
to the church bells
echo-up from the valley below.

Two young gringos wearing
white shirts told Pablo
God had restored his kingdom.

The rolling stone of Daniel
two and forty-four
had come to gather Pablo.

In his thirties Pablo got baptized
attended church for awhile
—then stopped.

Two Mormon elders sweated
up the mountain
to encourage him back.

Pablo was touched;
only friends zigzagged
up that path.

Pablo attended, tithed, visited
families with Edgar Cando,
shared the Word with friends.

At dawn in seminary
print on pages
took on sound, then sense.

Make Pablo a leader
in the Sunday School,
a gringo urged.

I want to, but you know
he garbles Spanish and reads
in syllables, said Bishop Toro.

But gringos speak worse,
read worse,
and we use them.

But with gringos,
poor Spanish is not
a lack of culture.

Would nonmembers return
after a meeting led
by a barely literate *Indio*?

Pablo zigzagged down and up
the mountain on Sundays
for six years.

Then Pablo died
and his bishop learned
three weeks later that—

Pablo's friends at the factory,
unaware of his new faith,
had pooled their pesos

and procured a mass for Pablo's soul.

—*H. Landon Miles*

Henry Landon Miles is an international consultant, freelance writer, and grandfather who is just finishing up a second master's degree, this time in English. After completing a career in the Foreign Service he has come to reside in Orem, Utah.

November

Pressed in sodden beds
layer upon layer
these leaves forget
the color of the sky—
changing,
not knowing
that they change;
the edges flake,
the velvet spots.

I worry them,
stirring nature's
process;
but I cannot put back
the pieces
lost to the loam.
And you, my mother . . .

—*Sally Taylor*

Sally Taylor is a professor at BYU and teaches literature and creative and technical writing. In addition to a workbook on technical writing, Sally has published a freshman English textbook, *The Critical Eye*, and a book of poetry entitled *A Little Light at the Edge of Day*. Sally, the mother of four and the grandmother of six, will soon be leaving on a mission to the French West Indies.

God's Pagan

Now I know that I shall die,
God has said that I may
be his pagan, dancing
barefoot on the sunbaked clay
and savoring for him
the sweet smoke
of spitted rabbit hissing
over red coals.

The porcupine's clamorous ramble
through the brush
is noise of my enjoyment.

I will climb the high slopes
for the hawk brushing
the air with its shaggy wings,
climb for its caw and keen eye.
Strain my arms high for the hawk.
Chant to the wide circle.

Not all pleasure is praise.
At night, love heavy,
I name the stars,
call the moon
ravisher, libertine,
burning its silver way
through the black dome,
abandoning its lovers.
It hears because I speak
and slows its drifting.

By day I sit by the calm pool
counting the stream's brown pebbles
where trout graze;
the morning sun beats
against my bare chest,
the afternoon dances hot.

God's wild man of water,
I leap for him in the foam
I swim in to contain me,
while sunlight blinds
the water droplets
sparkling in blue air.

Only this I must do:
kneel to the pool and to the rock
the water flows around,
wade out to place one broad,
green leaf there
on the gray stone.

—*Dave Paxman*

David Paxman is relatively new to the poetry writing world. He maintains that writing poetry is a good alternative to having a midlife crisis. David grew up in Provo, Utah, and has recently returned to teach British literature at Brigham Young University after many years away in Chicago and Hawaii.

My River

The world favors the dead:
rivers will run on
with their burden of silt
and limp leaves;
winds will scour the crags
long after the fossils
crumble in fallen rock
and burnish the branches of autumn
long after the last sap
has taken shelter in the roots.
Clouds will fog up
the small valleys
and moisten what green
the earth spits out
on its tilted shaft,
every turn an oblivion.
Atoms now in my bones
will hum in the soil
till the river
washes them away,
and beyond that.

I could take comfort
knowing that sky and rain
meant well, intended me.
That the atoms in my bones
have gained harmony
from having been mine.
What arrogance:
I am only a boat they cruise in,
mooring me at the graveyard
on their way down stream,
crooning.

I will toil with their bowlines,
refuse to be left behind
by thinking
what the world will be
when I am gone.

My mortification:
deltas humming to the tunes
of my molecules—
or dead quiet
while the rivers
wash away the world.

—*Dave Paxman*

Living in skin

Thick on the tongue, the taste of blood
lingers after you lick the cut,
changing the flavor of speech, of food.

Some days I'd like to bag this body—
leave it to fend-alone and soar
among peaks that should wear my ashes,

rather than know that someday, toxic,
this oldest friend will be canned and stored
against the hope of resurrection.

I want the bloody miracle!
My body shaped again from dust!
My spirit breathed back through my mouth!

And Val beside me, two made one!
not one like spirit fused with flesh
to host the irreducible.

And not like flesh and spirit now,
divorced at birth. Nor like our love
figured in sex fleshed out with blood.

A wedding that gives us to the earth,
cleansed of our fear to hold each other,
graced with the supple flesh and bone

that only practice can perfect,
with skin that wraps our thought in act
and bonds us with the lightest breath.

When God took on our skin, and crowded
to have in hand the power of death,
he beamed to feel his body weight.

him down in dust (cool on his feet),
and sunlight bent by dust to blood—
salt along his tongue, and sweet.

—Dennis Clark

Dennis Clark is a poet living in Orem, Utah, and works as a librarian at Orem Public Library.

At St. Bartholomew the Great

Fear not, little flock, the
kingdom is yours until I come.
Behold, I come quickly.

—Doctrine & Covenants 35:27

This morning we kneel and face
one another across the ancient choir.
Here at the heart of the cross,
we speak and pray and sing hymns
that gracefully rise to rounded
arches, which, like the mind
of God, order our words
in a curve of love.

The service ended, we climb
the tower and ring the news
to St. Paul's and to all
the spires around.

When Christ came in the middle
of time, it was not to the golden-
domed synagogues of David's city
but to shepherds in the fields,
blessing the cedars and stars
with the glory of his appearing.

When Christ comes again,
I believe it will be some bright
spring morning, just like today.
I imagine him flying up the Thames
from the east, passing over
St. Paul's with its rounded
dome and reasoned columns,
its baroque and Byzantine splendor.
Suddenly he will appear
in the sanctuary at St. Bartholomew's,
and take his place in the pews
with shopkeepers and clerks,
the nurses and nannies. Together
they will sing anthems, say the common
words, kneel and pray. When it is time
for the Eucharist they will be amazed
to see the flesh and word as one,
the wafer become the round opal of the sun
and the wine the glory of all vines.

—Robert A. Rees

Robert A. Rees is the director of arts at the UCLA extensions. Currently Robert and his wife, Ruth, are doing humanitarian service in higher education for the Lithuanian government and currently reside in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Debtor

I didn't miss the exit to the town
where we've been living, though these bags
(what would've been our next week's
groceries), might have blocked my view.

Drove past at full steam, heading south.
I've got more than half a tank of gas
and the credit card. Could be in Delta
before midnight; by morning, Las Vegas

and on towards some place where I don't owe,
don't expect apologies, or anything
beyond bare civility and an even
deal. Somewhere—but

I am not in fact leaving,
will turn around when I get to Payson.
“Pay up, son,” I'll growl it like you
were there, like I'm the sheriff, then turn,

come home. Yet I can't get even that far:
first, the Benjamin exit draws me off
and then I drive until the road offers:
Salem to the left, 4 miles.

Outside the City of Peace, the Calvary
Assembly of God; pastor Marvin Lipe,
serves notice that the Cross
means Forgiveness. Far West

Bank extends easy terms, low
monthly payments. I turn at the sign
for City Center, hoping for ample
grace at the heart of Salem. But what

I see are only houses like unopened
boxes—no wide verandas, no rose
trellis, not even a hint of lilac
in the dark air. I find myself

back on the road north, homebound,
remembering the empties my parents
would bring back for the refund, reckoning
how solvent we are together.

—*MaryJan Munger*

WR's new poetry editor, MaryJan Munger, lives in Springville, Utah. She is a mother, writer, and editor and will serve on the 1993 board of the Association for Mormon Letters. One of her recent poems, "White Silk, Winter Wedding, 1947," was chosen as the 1992 winner of Brigham Young University's Eisteddfod, Crown Competition and was published in the fall issue of *BYU Studies*. A collection of her poetry, which was accepted as a master's thesis, is available in the Brigham Young University library.

Morning Glory

An apprentice midwife couldn't be more careful, as I nick each morning glory seed and set them to soak all night. As I labor at the kitchen counter I know they are just hard, black pebbles. So small— how could five foot vines and heavenly blue trumpets lie curled inside? I would sooner say my blood carries rudimentary worlds, each beautiful as a boy's first marble. But in the morning when they swell to twice their size, bursting their jackets, I believe. I believe it all.

—*MaryJan Munger*

Annunciation

Donna Yeates, my mother's friend, was once Mary in the ward Christmas program. As herself, she had no children, couldn't even gain weight, which seemed to me part of the problem. She sighed to my mother that though she drank straight cream, her face never softened, her arms bony as bird legs never grew any rounder.

When she was Mary she wore midnight blue. Her skin was pure as milk; her hair, blue-black. She carried herself with the swan look of pregnant women, their lovely weary necks, their big buoyant bodies. I thought golden Gabriel must have streamed through her window in a white smock, yoked with two buckets of fresh cream, saying, "Take, drink, thou highly favored." Saying, "Praised be thy name among women."

MaryJan Munger



Merrie Cox

The Burial Pool

by John Bennion

Alison dreamed that the Goshute woman stood next to her bed dressed in white deerskin. The woman's face was in darkness, and Alison panicked, rolling to her hands and knees, clutching at the blankets. Across the room Howard, dressed in his thermal underwear, loaded logs into the red mouth of the cookstove. "Can't you sleep either?" he said grinning.

"I was asleep until you started banging around," she said. "I dreamed that the angel of death had come." She sat on the edge of the bed. "But it was only you in your ghost suit."

Howard stood with his hands on his hips. "Is there something actually wrong?"

"No," she held her hands across her belly. "Except that you're using your fatherly voice on me."

"Then stop imagining that there is. You've been frightened ever since you've been pregnant." Three years earlier the nurse had brought that other child, blue-faced and cold, wrapped in a white blanket, and laid it across her belly in the hospital. The baby had a strong, square face and Alison had wondered ever since what it would have been like to live with such a powerful child.

John Bennion grew up in western Utah, where this story is set. John lives with his wife and four children in Springville, Utah. He teaches literature and creative writing at Brigham Young University but is presently spending a year teaching at BYU-Hawaii. *Breeding Leah and Other Stories*, his first collection of short stories, was published last year by Signature Press. "The Burial Pool" was first published in *Christmas for the World*, an anthology of Christmas Stories printed by Aspen Books and is reprinted here by permission of the author.

JOHN BENNION

"I can't help it," she said. She took his hand and placed it against her. "Feel. He's awake as well, awake and kicking."

He jerked away. "It's weird to feel something moving inside your stomach."

"Silly," she said and lay down again. He returned to his mattress near the door. When he couldn't sleep, he twitched and twisted, keeping them both awake.

Alison woke again shortly after dawn. The clouds had blown away in the night, leaving the flat bowl of the desert valley white with snow. The only dark was the lava ridge which extended north and south behind their cabin. With the field glasses she could see the blue tarp which covered the dig, two miles north at the base of the ridge, and next to it the salt pool and stream, from which rose a mist. Alison knew that despite the sun it was bitter outside, cold as January even though it was only November. As she moved toward the table, the wind breathed through the walls of the cabin and chilled her skin.

Howard gave her a bowl of Cream o' Wheat sprinkled with brown sugar. When she stirred, she brought up lumps, some an inch across. She flapped her spoon against the top of the mush.

"What's the matter?" asked Howard.

"I don't understand how you achieved such large clods."

"Dumplings," he said. "I cooked it that way on purpose." She pushed the bowl away.

Howard left to start the truck, which he ran every day for fifteen minutes in case they needed to drive her to town. She dressed and, swaying slightly from side to side, walked to the tractor. "Quack, quack," she said, but Howard was up on the haystack and couldn't hear. He was only half finished loading the wagon, so she leaned against the tractor to watch as he threw bales down, five or six at a time, and then clambered to the wagon to arrange them.

She felt the child kicking again—a son, she knew from the last ultrasound. "You are too active," she said. Her friend from Rockwood, who was into bees' pollen and higher states of consciousness, and who, for her sixtieth birthday, had changed her name from Mary to Aurora, suggested that Alison talk to the baby, give him a prebirth

THE BURIAL POOL

name. Howard suggested that Cletus the Fetus might be good. Even though she felt foolish, Alison did talk to the child, ignoring Howard's comments. For the past few weeks, without having any specific ailment she could point to, she had felt that the child's attachment to her had become uncertain. Perhaps the act of naming could hold him to her longer than the last one. "Adam," she called up to Howard. "Abraham, Aaron," she said.

"Eustace," said Howard, "Lawrence or Edgar. He shouldn't have a name which is less dignified than his father's."

"You don't have a dignified bone in your body," she said. "You don't have a dignified follicle." Howard's hair swirled at the front, a tangle of opposite-turning cowlicks.

He grunted, moving another bale. Despite her better sense, she was unsettled by the fact that no name would stick. "Have patience, my hasty one," she whispered. "You have three more months."

She slid behind the tractor wheel and pushed the button to warm the glowplug. The engine started easily and, with Howard perched behind, she drove toward the cattle, which had all turned to walk toward the sound of the tractor. The wind blew from the north, a penetrating cold. She drove in a wide circle through the fields and Howard threw the hay off the back. The cattle followed, some running up to the wagon and twisting their heads sideways, long tongues extended, to gather hay from the corners of the moving stack. She never understood why they didn't just wait for Howard to throw it down.

The lane below the cabin had turned white, outlined by gray which also showed white, a band of gravel which bisected the valley. Suddenly she cramped, a severe low pain, and bent forward over the steering wheel. "Howard," she said, but he didn't hear. She stamped her foot down on the clutch. Her abdomen was so tight with pain that she thought she might pull a muscle. He threw off the last bale and walked up to the tractor.

"What's wrong?" he asked. She couldn't answer. "Can you get down?"

She shook her head. "Just let me sit here for a minute," she said finally.

JOHN BENNION

He tried to take her hand; she didn't move to let him, so he stood, shifting from foot to foot in the cold. Finally the cramp faded, leaving a dull ache.

"Is it false labor?" he said.

"Not this hard," she said. "It shouldn't have happened."

"I'll finish, then we'll go in to the doctor. Do you want me to drive you back up?"

"I'm all right now." She drove the tractor homeward along the base of the ridge, passing the stream, so salty that not even halogeton or salt grass would grow near it. When she came to the pool, she stopped the tractor. She knew the dream woman had come to her imagination from the dig, as if the shrunken corpse that she had helped exhume had filled with life again. What was the connection between dream and life, mind and body?

The April before Howard had decided that they should sink logs for a small pier, because the mud along the shore of the pool was pale and stinky, unpleasant to wade through when they wanted to soak in the warm mineral water. But when he started to dig the holes, his shovel uncovered a human head, white with crystals of salt, shrunken but hardly decomposed, its teeth grinning, leathery eyes closed.

Alison and the two anthropologists sent out from the University of Utah had spent the summer spading and brushing the mud and crystals from the limbs and faces of the Goshutes. They had to use a plywood frame and a pump to keep the mud and water from filling their hole. Close to the first corpse, they found more—in all, three males and a female. Alison was most interested in the woman, who had a small child fastened across her belly with inch-wide bands of leather.

One anthropologist claimed that the corpses had originally been floating in the pool before silt carried up by the shifting water channel had covered them. He pointed to the thongs tied around the ankles of all four adult Goshutes. He thought that in the burial ceremony the Goshutes tied boulders to the ankles of the dead before dropping them into the mineral-laden water for preservation.

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The other anthropologist wasn't so sure. Alison agreed with the first, and she wondered what the Goshutes thought and felt when they stood on the bank and lowered their loved ones into the deep water. She knew that for Navajos heaven is earthward. Perhaps Goshutes were similar; they might have believed that passing down through the heavy water was part of being reborn into the next life. The woman's friends had hoped to bind her to her child through that difficult passage.

"Dear God," said Alison, putting the tractor back in gear, "bless me not to lose this one. Bless us to stay together." She steered around the pool and drove upward toward the cabin.

At the shed Alison cut off the engine and walked slowly into the cabin. She lay sideways on the bed, waiting for Howard. By the time he returned, she discovered that she had bled. "It's starting again," she said to him. "I'm going to lose this one too." Saying it opened a dark place inside and she found herself weeping. Howard helped her dress, then walked her out to the truck.

He drove slowly at first, but the truck continually slipped into the ruts, jolting her. She felt pain low in her belly and gripped the armrest. Howard pulled from their dirt lane onto the gravel road. "You should have called me." His face was white, frightened, and he drove too fast on the better road. She leaned across and put her head on his lap.

"I kept thinking you'd come in any minute." She turned on her back and reached upward between his arms to touch his face, which was still angry.

They drove up the long narrow valley, the last evidence of a river which had connected two parts of Lake Bonneville. From Howard's lap she could see a flat-topped butte, with huge boulders along its crown in a line, sentinels that seemed as tall and rectangular as those at Stonehenge. As they drove up around the flanks of the Simpson Mountains, she sat up and looked out at the hills below on the plane; they were rounded, knobby, so that they looked like the carcasses of huge prehistoric creatures, half sunk in mud. Finally, they crossed the pass into Rockwood Valley, down into the town.

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Dr. Peterson, whose face was as broad and red as an old farmer's, wanted her to have another expensive ultrasound. Alison watched the monitor as he directed the gray, flat-bottomed instrument across her belly, which had been smeared with an amber gel. The child was curled, floating in what showed on the screen as shadows of flesh and liquid. She could see his arms and legs, his tiny penis, the coil of the umbilical cord. The image of the moving child had reassured her before, but now the tissues which were supposed to bind him to her seemed so tenuous.

"Your placenta is already starting to detach," he said, pointing to a cloud on the screen. "You should be in the hospital, but if you'll stay in bed and rest . . ." He knew they couldn't afford that cost and she knew it was his way of frightening them into obedience. "If you can keep the baby until it's eight months along, it'll have a much better chance of surviving."

As soon as they were home, Howard made her lie down. The cabin was familiar after the doctor's office, filled with the smell of wood smoke and propane instead of antiseptic; the sight of her table and cookstove comforted her. She dozed but woke again when Howard came back in to cook. She ate sitting cross-legged on the bed—a bowl of potatoes and canned meat boiled in tomato sauce. "You believe in functional cooking, don't you?" she said.

The days through the bulk of November were like a tunnel, where she woke and dozed, keeping her body quiet. She believed that she was getting worse, that the placenta was continually loosening itself, getting ready so early that her child would die. But surprisingly, she didn't bleed again. Howard did his work and hers, seldom talking to her; moving quietly through the house: cooking, loading the fire, scrubbing the floor, fueling the generator. "You're too much of a slinker," she said to him one day. "Noise won't bother me. I'm bored out of my gourd." So he immediately made a symphony of banging pots with a wooden spoon. He sang old Rolling Stones songs to her while he boiled water in their canning kettle and started the wringer washer in the corner of their cabin. Later, she dozed to the rhythmic sound, willing the baby to stay. "Steady now," she said. "No need to

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be an early bird. Stay with me."

Several times she woke to the ticking of snow against the window. She sat on the bed watching the gray-white clouds sweep across the valley. With the binoculars she watched the water in the pool, blacker than the sky. Other days the clouds blew away and the bitter wind seemed to come through the wall to her bed. On those clear, cold days the sun made the snow burn with white light. Howard moved in his dark parka across the fields below her window. When he came in, he stamped his feet and banged his hands together. "Damn cold," he said. "The truck won't start today." He drained the oil and antifreeze and heated them in tin pans on the stove.

"Careful, you're going to burn us," she said. But by noon, he had the truck going.

The child seemed to grow larger every day, and she sat on the bed with her legs apart, her arms and hands limp. Her stomach bulged until she thought her skin would split. She no longer had the energy to change her clothing or wash her face and hair. Howard slept on his mattress, so that he wouldn't disturb her. He usually ate quickly, then left to work again.

Thanksgiving Day they ate canned quail, potatoes, sweetened carrots, and drank Coca-Cola. "When it's winter, it's hard to believe that things will grow again," she said. "It's easy to believe that everything will always be cold."

"You're beastly depressed," he said. "Think about something cheerful, like sleeping." She snapped her fingers in his face, and he went outside again. When she looked in the mirror, she found that her face had become pale and luminous, like the skin of a very old person.

The morning after another deep snow, she found blood again. Howard rushed out to start the truck. The wind blew against the cabin, making a low sound like an oboe. An hour later he came back in. "I can't figure out what's wrong," he said. "Maybe it's water in the gas. Maybe the timing chain has slipped. I don't know what to do."

She dozed, woke to a slight pain, dozed again. Finally, she sat up on the bed and looked out the window. Howard, dressed in his black

parka, stood in front of the raised hood of the truck. Suddenly, he dropped to his knees. Soon he rose and chained the truck to the tractor, tied the wheel of the tractor straight and started it across the flat toward a patch of field which had already been blown clear. The wheels of the truck plowed sideways through the snow, until he jumped off the tractor and jerked open the door of the truck to straighten them. The tractor wasn't going straight and the truck missed the dry patch by fifty yards.

Alison got up slowly and, after dressing herself, stood in the doorway of the cabin. Somehow Howard had turned the tractor and truck and was crossing the patch of earth. Although the wheels raised dust as they dragged, the truck wouldn't start. Soon the truck was back on the snow where there was no traction. With the binoculars she saw Howard slumped inside the still-moving truck, his head forward on the wheel. "Please, God, no," she said. But then he opened the door and unhooked the chain. He drove the tractor back to where she stood.

"You should be inside lying down," he said. She heard the faint sound of another engine. Taking his shoulder, she turned him toward the far end of the valley, where the yellow plow crawled. He ran to the tractor and drove it toward the main road. Alison returned inside to sit at the table but soon the long yellow road-grader pulled up to the front of their cabin, the door open, a small and swarthy man inside.

"*Que pasa?*" he said. "You need an ambulance?" She sat on the seat, while the driver stood beside her, steering. Howard crouched behind in the tool space. She looked down at the dig as they passed. The baby had been reattached to its mother with leather bands. "You can't beat death that easily," thought Alison. The driver, whose name she missed because of the noise in the cabin, apparently thought she was going to have her baby any minute: he kept the blade high and the speedometer at forty until they roared up to the doctor's office.

"I advise you not to go home," Dr. Peterson said later. "It's too risky to drive back and forth across bad roads in your condition. You need to use some sense. Stay in town."

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Alison called her friend, Mary-Aurora, who came and drove them to her house. She owned a greenhouse, one section of which she kept going even in the winter. With Alison and Howard seated in her kitchen, she strode, self-assured as a goddess, back to that steamy building and returned with a tall poinsettia, which she gave to Howard. "We'll have a good time together," she said to Alison. "A woman's time without your husband."

He looked down into the exotic leaves. If a cow or a human couldn't eat a plant, Alison knew, Howard didn't see any use it. But he walked to the door with the pot. "I'll come in every Sunday," he said. He walked down the street toward the house of a friend, who had agreed to drive him out and help start the truck.

Alison's bedroom was at the top of Aurora's white frame house, a pleasant room with a view of the mountains between the town and the deeper desert where Howard was. She stayed in bed night and day, talking to the child, whom Aurora had named Nicodemus because he was a waverer.

They had been friends for two years but were still unfamiliar with each other's deeper selves. Often, when they needed to talk, they instead found themselves issuing proclamations:

"You can will your body to heal itself," said Aurora.

"It's subject to powers beyond my control."

"You are majestic, an eternal being of power."

"We are transients, here a minute, then dead and buried."

"The earth is a garden."

"The earth is a cross on which we are sacrificed."

After these bold statements, they both became frightened and clung to each other on Alison's bed.

The first Sunday was warm. From her window she saw puddles melting in the roads. Although she watched the road until dark, Howard didn't have the sense to come before the roads froze again. Finally around ten, he drove up and pounded on the door. He lay his sleeping bag on the rug beside her bed and held her hand. He talked about how rough the early cold was for the cattle, the difficulty of breaking ice and hauling hay alone. She dozed until midnight, the

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pleasant rhythm of his voice recreating their valley for her. Shortly after light he was gone.

Although she was careful to keep herself still, she knew that resting hadn't prevented her bleeding a second time. Once the unnatural process of detachment started, she felt it would continue to its end. Aurora fussed over her, bringing dinner up and talking to her while she ate. She gave Alison positive things to read—*Walden* and New Age literature. She told Alison that depression could cause physical problems. Alison knew that her sadness was the natural fear of an impending death.

Contrary to both their expectations, toward Christmas Alison felt stronger again; she had a record of three weeks without bleeding. The doctor told her she should get some light exercise. She went on short walks, passing under the red and green lights on Main Street and the black-barked trees, their branches reaching up like fingers. She disliked the garish lights, but she enjoyed walking on the side streets, looking at the different kinds of houses. She walked with Howard one night, up onto the low ridge above town. They sat and watched the deer and elk come down to gnaw the hay stacks of the town farmers.

On Christmas Eve she and Aurora dressed themselves in heavy coats and built a fire outside in the barbecue. By the light of the flame Alison read the first part of Luke. They had finished and returned inside when Howard finally came—red faced from having to drive with the window open because the defroster had broken.

"You need a new truck," said Aurora.

"For once I agree with you," he said. "Maybe one of our prosperous friends will float us a loan."

"You don't have any prosperous friends," said Aurora. "You are such a pair. With that truck you're an accident waiting to happen. And Alison—you spend all your time willing disaster. You believe in fate, don't you? Whatever will be, will be. You're like two pagans." She rose to bring some hot chocolate.

"How can I hold my head up anymore, knowing that?" said Howard.

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"She's part right, you know." When Aurora came back, Alison turned to her. "I know we're jinxed," she said. "But we have kind friends." Aurora smiled at her and the three of them sat in a circle, their cups steaming.

Two days before New Year's Alison had another appointment with Dr. Peterson. He examined her carefully. "The placenta is firmly attached," he said.

"I'd like to go home then," she said.

"We've about made it," he said. "You're eight months and a week."

"Yes," she said. "So I can go home for a while."

"You are a strong-willed woman," he said.

"Stubborn as a mule."

That Sunday she told Howard she was returning with him. It was evening before they started back. During the afternoon, clouds had blown in, covering Rockwood like a gray, inverted bowl. The street lights and Christmas lights were blurs of white, red, and green behind them as they started back across the desert. Snow beat into the windshield. Howard drove slowly so that they wouldn't slip off the road.

When they finally came to the mineral pool, Alison reached for Howard's hand. "Let's stop for a minute and look," she said. They walked out into the snow, and she watched the flakes spin in masses above them. The wind flapped the blue plastic, shrieked through the squat brush. "I want to have a warm soak," she said, walking back toward the truck.

"Don't be crazy," he said. She quickly slipped out of her clothes, leaving them in a dark heap on the seat.

"The snow is cold," she said, walking past him toward the pool.

"Alison," he said, touching her arm. "Use some sense. It's a blizzard out here."

"It's time for a celebration," she said. "We're all alive. What's the danger?"

"Cold," he said. The wind was freezing her so she stepped quickly down the bank into the warm water. She turned and floated on her back when it was deep enough. "We won," she called. "No one had

to follow." Howard stood above her on the bank as she slipped backward through the water. The water was so thick with salt that it held her buoyant. Looking down at the pale curve of her belly, she kicked herself backward; she felt like a sleek water creature.

"Howard, I missed you, Howard." She floated, arms and legs motionless. He kicked off his boots and dropped his coat. When she glanced up again he had peeled down to his white thermals and was sidling down into the water. She watched his pale face come up to her. "It's all right," she said, touching his cheek. "Swimming is not strenuous at all. My belly keeps me up. And the water's not too hot for the baby."

"There's no fire in the cabin."

"So I'll sit in the truck while you build one."

"Thanks loads," he said. He touched her hand, her head, curved his arms around her. The storm whistled above them. Floating on her back, her hand in his hand, she watched the banks of snowflakes turning in the limitless depth above them. She felt disoriented, not knowing which way was up, which down, held between by the thick fluid. She imagined those other floaters, ankles bound, sunk upright in the deep water, waiting for passage back into the sun. She could leave the pool anytime she wanted, didn't have to remain as they had for year on year, century on century. She and her child had not been compelled to join them. The water was warm on her body and limbs, the air and melting flakes cold on her face and belly. Each sensation felt like a miracle.

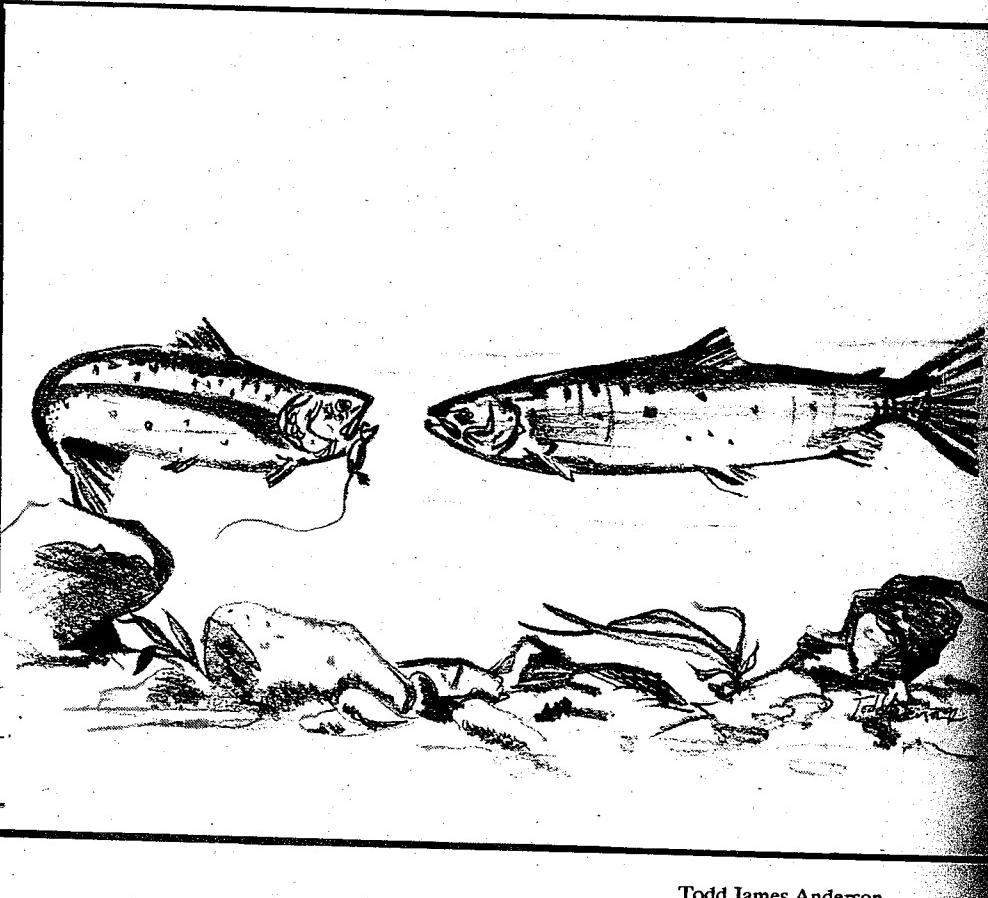
"The snow's getting deeper," Howard said finally. "We need to get to the cabin." The bank was slick and he scrambled out on hands and knees. When he bent backward to help Alison, he slipped toward her, and she had to come out like a crab as well. He lifted her to her feet and they walked quickly through the snow, their palms and knees marked with black mud. "That was nice," said Alison. She laughed at Howard, who hobbled barefoot, carrying his bundle of clothing."

"I've been so lonely," he said. "I'm glad you're home."

She turned the heater on full and wiped herself clean with a newspaper she found on the floor. Then she slipped her dress back over her. Before they were halfway to the cabin she was warm again.

Howard, who hadn't removed his wet underwear, shivered with cold, his teeth chattering. When they came to the cabin he left the truck running and rushed inside. Soon she saw a light, and then he stood naked in the door grinning.

"You are beautiful," she called, as she walked toward him. "He's kicking again. You should feel." She took his hand before he could step back, guiding his fingers over the curve of her belly. She looked up into his face as they both felt the bumping of a foot or fist knocking to get out.



Brothers

By Margaret Blair Young

Derek began his apostasy in the seventh month of his mission, when his district leader, Elder Morris, died of an aneurysm. Derek and his companion, with six other missionaries, were with him when it happened, planning a baptism. Morris said he was sick, then stumbled to his bedroom and stayed there. Elder Jasper went to see how he was doing. Jasper's weak, frantic voice called them: "Guys? Something's really wrong. Come in here, guys."

Every night for the rest of his mission, and at least monthly ever after, Derek saw Elder Morris: pasty-faced, a drop of vomit on his lower lip, eyes stunned open. Derek's mind became obsessed with its first look at death, and with his and the others' reactions to it. He knew every nuance of their conversation over the body after they had stroked, nudged, jostled it, shouted to the eyes WAKE UP. He could not remember who had said what (he had said nothing), but he knew the words, knew the silences:

"Elder? Morris?"

Silence.

"Let's bless him. Can't we raise him, don't you think? Isn't that like a priesthood privilege?"

Margaret Young resides with her husband and four children in Provo, Utah. Both she and her husband teach English at Brigham Young University. In 1990 Margaret published her first novel, *House Without Walls*, with Deseret Book. Her second novel, *Salvadore*, was published by Aspen Books in 1992. Her *Elegies and Love Songs*, a book of short stories, was published by the University of Idaho Press, also in 1992.

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"Don't you know what's happened?"

"Know?!"

"He's finishing up on the other side. Can't you feel the presence?"

"What?"

"Angels. Don't you get it? While we were cutting the bull in there, Morris was having himself a vision. He was invited home, and he accepted."

Silence. Hands almost touching the body again, pulling back.

"He's so white. Like he's someone else."

Silence.

"We should pray, shouldn't we? Don't you think so? Let's pray."

"I think his spirit's still here."

"I'm sick. I'm going to be sick."

"You pray, Jasper."

"He's still here."

"Hey, really. I'm really sick."

Silence.

"Our Father—"

"Please!"

Then crying. Jasper first, then each of them, one at a time, then all of them huddled together, sobbing, heaving the unfinished prayer to unfathomable God.

During all the rituals that followed, Derek kept asking himself what fear was in them that needed that lie of angels.

Throughout his mission—even once in a font, white-clothed for baptism—Derek asked himself, Why these deceptions, these costumes, the placebo of scripture?

He kept up the RM act for six months after his return, out of love for his mother, and then went away to school and dropped it. His first stop in Detroit, where he would attend Wayne State, was the local Woolworth's. He bought six pairs of boxer shorts and T-shirts.

Five years later, financed by the National Guard, he completed his Ph.D. in psychology, emphasizing drug abuse therapy. His inactivity was no longer secret, though his mother feigned ignorance. His younger brother, Clayton, who had been the family "wild kid"

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(meaning he had drunk beer during his senior year and cruised Center Street) replaced Derek as Model Mormon Man. It amused him to watch how smoothly Clay filled the void in the family script. He had laughed when Clay phoned to tell him of his mission call to Bolivia (where Derek had also served.) "Families are forever," Derek said, meaning something far different from what Clay wanted him to mean.

Forever. Siblings atoning for each other, re-tying knots, taking care of Mom. Forever.

"It is true," Clay said, answering his own desires, his own imaginings.

(Fine. Let him be the family Jesus, Derek thought.)

He, Derek, was out of the circle, except in his mother's careful illusions. He was starting another circle, fresh.

Through two marriages and hundreds of messed-up kids, hundreds of hypnosis sessions where the rare child would recall past lives, Derek convinced himself that his circle was unlinked. He was Creator and Creatrix.

It was not that he had abandoned that other world, the tangled Eden of his first self, but he refused to be controlled by it. He attended all his mother's family reunions and behaved, to his thinking, in a more positive (he had once said "more Christian") way than any of the rest of them. He hugged his family, listened—*really* listened—to them, and generously let them be who they were.

Clayton became a bishop, later a counsellor in a stake presidency, and was currently president of his stake mission, which meant he still wore an identification badge to church.

There were times when Derek spoke directly, even harshly to his family—for he was trained in confrontation—but always within him was a seething love for them and their sweet little world.

It was fifteen years into the separate circles, appropriately at a family reunion, that Clayton broke down. He called all the men together, needing priesthood strength, he said.

Derek smiled tolerance.

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This reunion was being held at Island Park, where twenty years past the brothers had built a cabin with their father—six months before he abandoned them for a woman half their mother's age and size. At Clay's request, the women and children stayed in the kitchen, preparing lunch and putting on puppet shows, while the men went to a clearing in the woods. There, Clay said he was at a loss. "It's my son," he said, weeping. "It's Corey."

Only Derek came forward to comfort his brother, put his arm around his shoulders.

"What's happening, Clay?" he asked softly.

Clay moved his mouth around the sob that wanted escaping. "I'm losing him."

"Is he doing drugs?"

"Yeah. And stealing from me. Two hundred dollars last month. There are all the signs—you know. I never told anyone, at least not family, but last year he went to Sundance and stole the best skis he could find. You know who they belonged to?" A grim smile. "Goldie Hawn. Can you believe it? She's not pressing charges. I mean, I've had actual heart-to-heart talks with her. I call her by her first name, and she's a good lady, has kids too. Maybe she should press charges, I don't know. Things are getting out of hand. Do you understand what I'm saying? I don't know who my son is anymore." He closed his eyes, bit down on the cry.

Uncle George stepped forward and asked Clay what he wanted them to do.

"Maybe," said Clay, "maybe could you give me a blessing? A priesthood blessing?"

Derek moved back. The other men circled his brother, put their hands on his head. Uncle George called down angels to bear Clayton up in this trial.

Derek grinned. Angels!

Later in the day, after lunch, Derek told Clay that maybe the three of them should spend a week alone at the cabin. No women. Just Derek, Clay, and Corey.

"Hey, it's how I make my living," said Derek. "I make ends meet

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by pulling kids out of their stupor. Let me help you."

Clayton nodded cautiously.

Derek looked at his brother, noticed how thin he was, how his blonde hair was going silver and receding. "You eating all right?" he said.

"Sure. Yeah, I eat."

"You're thin. You look like you did after your mission." (A bout with Bolivian dysentery had liquified and expelled twenty pounds of him.)

"I eat."

"Okay. Don't stop eating. You need strength for this," Derek said.

Clay looked at him. Their eyes were the same: blue, thick-lashed, aging. But Derek still had hair on his head and was two inches taller than his brother, thirty pounds heavier.

"No forty-day fasts, understand me, Clay?" Derek grinned to let his brother know this was part joke.

"I eat." Clay shrugged uncomfortably. Then, remembering himself, he stiffened and stretched to his fullest height. His eyes no longer oozed helplessness. He wore his compassion now—doing a damn good imitation, Derek thought, of Bishop Clay Reynolds—and clearly wondering from the depths of his habitual goodness how he might save his apostate brother.

Derek put his arm around him playfully and kissed his cheek.

Corey was a big kid, with shoulder-length hair that belonged on a Botticelli angel. His face was sweet. He smiled a lot. He smiled when he said, "I don't really believe in morality, Uncle Derek. To be honest with you."

"I see," said Derek. "Well, at least you don't lie."

They were fishing salmon in a rippled inlet of the Snake, surrounded by a tangle of new-leaved oak, aspen, pine, and dogwood. Clay had landed one fish, Derek none, and Corey three 10-pounders plus two midsized rainbow trout.

"Son, you're a natural at this," said Clay. "I've never seen such a fisherman. Have you, Derek? Maybe, Corey, you should be a park ranger or something. You like that idea?"

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Corey smiled radiantly and looked at his father with what seemed genuine affection. "Dad," he said, "I meant what I said."

Clayton started the "You know, son, when I was your age . . ." speech. Derek moved upstream.

There, surrounded by the river smells, the pine, the breath of decay from their bucketed fish, Derek found the fragrance of hyacinth. This made him nervous, reminding him as it did of his mother, whom he sometimes called "The Hyacinth Girl." She was always forcing hyacinths during the winter, indulging in them—hundreds lining their front walk, bees bobbing around them—through spring. Though he couldn't see them, he was sure she had planted some here too, giving the cabin site "a woman's touch."

When Clay joined him, Derek asked if he could smell them too.

Clay thought he could.

"Where's Corey?" Derek asked.

"Doing his salmon at the cabin. You hungry?"

He nodded, then said what was essential. "How about, after lunch, you let me have Corey alone for a bit?"

Clay looked away. "Why?"

"God," Derek muttered. "Why do you think? Who am I anyway?" He reeled in his empty hook.

"All right," said Clay. "For a bit. But I have one request I want you to honor."

"Don't be so formal, Clay. Do I make you that edgy?"

"You talk to him all you want. Do your job, what you're trained to, fine. But you leave the Church alone. Is that understood?"

Derek chuckled and mimicked, "Is that understood?" You're sounding a lot like Mom, you know." He glanced at his brother on the safe shore. "Listen, if it's possible, Clay, I'll keep the Church long, long distance." He trudged out of the water. He wanted to put his arm around his brother, to reassure him or just remind him of who they were together. Clay didn't want to be touched, though; he could tell that.

Clay moved his feet, hedging, shifting his weight. Everything Clay did was nervous. He seemed a puppet, afraid of turning real. The pain it would bring.

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"What do you mean 'if it's possible,'" Clay asked, stuttering on the *P*.

Derek spoke quietly, benevolently. "If it turns out the Church isn't the core of his problem." He took off his fishing boots, shook the water out of them.

Clay looked down then drew himself up again in his Bishop Reynolds posture and locked fierce eyes with Derek's. "Der, I don't want you taking him further away from me than he is. I haven't quit my dreams for him. I want that boy to serve a mission next year. The Church, the gospel, those are the best gifts I can give him. They're what you gave me—your best gifts. Your good example."

"Curr-ist!" said Derek, skipping a stone that had fallen into his boot, "let's not do that 'good example' shit, huh?"

Clayton cringed.

"Clay, what you have to understand is how families work. Now you listen to me for a change."

"I'm listening," Clay said. But he turned away, watching a squirrel fret over acorns in a tall oak. Clay's eyes squinted in the sunlight, his cheeks gleamed. He looked like he was having himself a vision.

"Listen," Derek said. "Clay, we carry on the agendas of ancestors we've never even heard of, you've got to understand that. That's our real genealogy. We're fighting this great gender war that started way the hell back with Great-great-great Grandpa Whazzisface who was sick to death of being dominated by his nag of a wife. He was a farmer, see, loved the earth. Wild, glorious, fertile earth. Look around you, breathe it in. You feel that? Brother, breathe it deep!"

Clay looked at him. He didn't seem to be breathing at all.

"All he wanted of his wife was simply a place to plant seed. Understand me?"

Clay turned again to watch the squirrel. Derek started packing his gear in his tackle box.

"Only Grandma wanted things nice. Pretty house, spices perfect in her bread, a good church, fancy clothes. Well, he liked her bread and he liked the kids they made together, so he played along with the rest of it. And sure enough, eventually one side of him adored the way she could sing those revival hymns, half believed in her

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certainty about heaven. But the other half of him was weary with her needs. You get my drift? The other half just wanted to be alone under the stars."

Clay looked back at him, blinking, then suddenly grinned. "And they call us Mormons misogynists!" he said.

"Now listen!" Derek wanted to clutch his brother's shoulders, to squeeze those bony arms and impress the strength of his words into that sick flesh. Clay's resistance was still too thick. "Generation after generation, Clay, the men take Grandpa's script. Half of them rebel because Grandpa felt so closed in, and the other half become Righteous Priesthood Bearers, because they love her anyway, and all she does for them. Understand what I'm saying? Your boy's just taking his place in the male script. Like Dad did. That's why I say I'll leave the Church out of our conversation if it isn't core. But my guess is—"

"The Church is true," Clay said in as simple and straightforward a tone as he ever used and started walking towards the cabin. Wild bluebells and black-eyed Susans brushed his jeans, sprang back from his hurry.

"Good boy, Clay," Derek called after him. "That's a very good boy."

Clay looked back. "Come on," he said. "Let's eat."

When the brothers arrived at the cabin, the fish were sizzling and pungent. Corey had stick-speared them and lined them up over the flame. He was at the table, eating the largest salmon with his hands. He gave them a joyous smile. Derek knew he was high.

"You couldn't wait for us to join you for lunch, son?" said Clay. "We were just outside."

"I cooked you some right there," said Corey, trying (Oh, mighty effort!) to keep his speech slow.

Derek stood behind Corey, then leaned over him, both his hands beside Corey's elbows. "Very clever, Corey," he whispered. "Where is it?"

Corey hunched and bit into his salmon. "Give me some goddamn space," he said.

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With a smooth, feline motion, Derek pulled him up from his chair, tripped him, and controlled his fall so that it was slow and almost graceful. He pinned him to the floor.

"Rule number one," whispered Derek, crouched over Corey like a cougar its prey, "you don't screw around with me, you got that? Now if you want to be a junkie, fine. But not here, goddamn it. You want to be here, you come clean." He waited, then said gently, "You want to be here?"

"Yeah," Corey said, terrorized. "I want to be here."

"Where is it?"

"What?"

Derek pressed the shoulders. "Not with me, you don't."

"My pack. Upstairs. In my blue socks."

With his head, Derek motioned for Clay to find the stash. Clay left the room.

"You uncomfortable?" Derek asked.

"Yeah."

"Feel like a prisoner?"

"Yeah."

"You want to be free?"

"Yeah."

"You think drugs will make you free?"

"No."

"Tell the truth."

"Yeah."

"Thank you. All right, Corey, I'm going to let you up and show you freedom. I'm going to give you some time and some exercise to get you over that hit, and then you and I are going to watch the stars come out. How does that sound?"

Still pinned, Corey glared. "Oh goody. Goody gumdrops."

Derek pressed harder.

"We're going to watch meteor showers, Corey."

Clay came into the room then, holding the blue socks and a handful of pills, powders, joints. "Why?" he said to Corey. "Why would you deceive us like this?" He looked down at his son's face, then at his

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brother's. "Let him go, Der," he said. "C-c-come on." (Stuttering again. Clay hadn't stuttered since first grade.)

Derek stood, then Corey did. They were the same height.

"You want to learn something about National Guard, boy?" said Derek.

Corey stepped back, nodding uncertainly.

"Start jogging, then. Just jog around the cabin, huh? Inside. Jog around the table while your papa and I eat that great-smelling fish."

Corey looked like he was setting to run out the door. Derek made a threatening move toward him and Corey began jogging.

Derek sat at one end of the table and gestured for Clay to sit at the other.

"National Guard," Derek said. "Put me through school, you know. During the summers we'd go to camp and learn how to kill people. Great fun. Got to taste tear gas, too. They'd lock each team in a room—we'd be wearing masks—and they'd spray the gas. Nobody could come out until nobody was wearing a gas mask. The last guy out of his would get beat up pretty bad. We'd all pummel him and pull at his face, trying to make him breathe what we were breathing. And what we were breathing was reaching into our noses and ears and throats and yanking up sweat and tears and snot."

"Sound fun to you, Corey?" Derek asked, then added, "keep jogging. Because, understand me, if you can't respond to a little bit of friendly persuasion, I'll recommend you take a month with the Guard. Call it Tough Love. Your pace is slacking, boy. Pick up your feet."

Clayton went to the coals and retrieved two trout. The brothers ate their fish. The boy jogged.

A half hour later, the sun was balanced on gold strings. Corey was whimpering with each step. Derek and Clayton had finished their meal and a nostalgic conversation that pretended Corey wasn't there.

"You can move into a walk now," Derek said, and five minutes later, "That'll do."

Corey collapsed.

"Outside," Derek said. "Let's go now."

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Clayton wanted to help his boy up. Derek said no, let him crawl. The brothers moved onto the porch, into the coming night, and waited for Corey to join them.

"You don't need to get up," Derek told the boy when he stumbled out the door. "In fact, if you want to, take your clothes off and go lie down and look up into the sky. Take your shirt off, boy. Go feel the dead leaves on your back. Feel how the earth loves you and wants you back. Feel how short your life is. Lie down; let your body rest. Look at the stars. There'll be meteor showers tonight. Universal morse code. Look up."

The tallest pine—a silhouette—pointed to dim Orion's back foot. The sky was sinking from turquoise to indigo. The Big Dipper was spilling glitter.

"If it turns out there are gods," said Derek softly, "I won't be surprised if some goddess is in charge. Embracing the whole cosmos. Hair making clouds, eyes the sky. Mother. The Father makes the earth, but on the sly he throws in mosquitos and poisonous snakes. Mother says she'll step on such nasties. Their boys become Jehovah and Lucifer. I won't be surprised."

"That's not how it is," said Clayton.

Derek glanced at him. "Wasn't I going to have the kid alone?"

"Not yet," said Clay.

"You might be sorry," Derek said, and then to Corey, "See the North Star? Right up there."

"Yeah." Corey was low, wanting a hit. Derek knew it and knew how to relieve him.

"I want to hypnotize you, Corey," he said. "I know what you're going through. Hypnosis can help. You want help?"

"Yeah."

"Lie down then," Derek said, and Corey obeyed.

Clayton touched his brother's hand. "No," he mouthed when Derek looked at him.

Clay was so small, so ill. Derek wished he could appease him, but he was trained in the brutal rightness of need. And he was suddenly, inexplicably lonely. He shook his head, and Clay sat down, defeated.

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"Corey. Corey, imagine you are deep, deep in the earth. You see aspen and oaks around you. They're tall, getting taller, taller as you recede into the earth. Those aspen leaves are quivering, laughing at you. So tall. You are moving deeper and deeper into the earth. You can smell flowers. Roses, I think, but you can choose. You can see a waterfall in the distance. It looks like someone is pouring milk over all the forest. Do you see it?"

"Yes." Corey lifted his head. Derek covered it with his hands and gently pushed it back down.

Clay held his own head, bowed. Frightened.

"It has a dull roar," said Derek, hands still blessing Corey with pressure. "The waterfall roars like some mountain cat that never stops. Listen to the water. Clean, clear water. Hear it?"

"Yes."

"You are sleepy. You are moving deeper and deeper into earth." Derek pushed gently with his hands. "Deeper. Your eyelids are so heavy you can't open them. Deeper and deeper into earth. And with every inch you recede from conscious life, you are grateful for your distance. You want to rest. You want to rest. Your body, your eyes, your hands, they are so heavy. Deeper. Deeper."

Clayton, when Derek glanced at him, looked ready to vomit.

"With every inch you move into the earth, you lose your craving for chemicals. You want only what is real, only what is true. Deeper. Deeper. Can you hear me?"

"Yes." His voice low but still tense.

It took a full ten minutes of visualizing, ten minutes of rhythmic speech and backwards counting, before Derek was sure the boy was under.

"Corey," he asked, "what are you feeling?"

"Fine."

"Fine how?"

A long pause. "I'm dead."

"It feels like you're dead, doesn't it. What's that like?"

"Dark."

"Are you frightened, Corey?"

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"Not my name," he mumbled.

Derek glanced at his brother. "Past life, maybe," he whispered apologetically. "It happens."

Clay stood. Derek motioned him back down and was surprised at how readily he obeyed.

"What is your name?"

"Don't know for sure."

"Have you been born yet?"

"Sure."

"Of course. Sure." He nodded to Clay.

"People are crying," Corey said in that relaxed, hypnotized voice.

"Who?"

"The other missionaries."

"You're a missionary?" Derek's hands lifted from the boy's head.

He glanced suspiciously at Clay.

"My head."

"Your head what?"

"It sort of—it burst. Inside, it burst."

"Did it?"

"Too much pressure."

"It burst?"

"They're talking," said Corey. "One of them says there are angels here."

His eyes on Clay, Derek muttered, "Right. So, are there angels?"

"Yes. There are."

He tried to remember how much he had told his brother about Elder Morris. He could not recall mentioning more than the fact of his death.

"Grandma is here," said Corey. "Wants me with her. Misses me, wants me with her. Angel."

Derek touched his brother's hand. When he saw the innocent confusion on Clay's face, he whispered to him, "Don't worry. This isn't real. He's feeling vibes from my consciousness. They're my vibes. It's not real, Clay." Then to Corey, louder, "What are the angels saying?"

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"No words. I need to be with her."

Derek scratched his upper lip. "I think he might be faking, to be honest with you," he told Clay.

"Please. Let me go," said Corey.

"Corey, are you making this up?"

"Bring him out of it, Der," said Clay. "Don't do this."

"Please. Let me go. Please."

"That's enough, Corey," said Derek. "I'm bringing you back now. Bringing you back." He spoke rapidly. This was a memorized speech, and he wanted done with it. "I'm going to count from ten to one, Corey. With each number, you will awaken. When I say one, you will be fully awake and refreshed. You will have a revulsion for all drugs—even if you're faking. I'm speaking, now, to your subconscious. Listen to me. You want only what's real. No more chemicals. No more lies. Ten."

"It's so bright."

"Nine."

"I'm climbing."

"Just listen, Corey. Don't talk anymore. Eight."

"I want to see her!"

"Corey, you're imagining. Listen, Corey. Seven."

"She's over there with him."

"Six."

"Who?" said Clay. "Who's over there?"

"God."

"Five. You're waking up, Corey. This is all a dream."

"Please. Let me go."

"Four. Start waking up, Corey."

"I was there. Saw it all! I was there! Bringing him home."

"Shut up now, Corey. Three."

"There!"

"Two."

The boy sighed and seemed to collapse within himself.

"One. Open your eyes."

Corey's eyelids fluttered open. His eyes were dazed, then curious.

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He blinked.

"You all right?" said Clay.

He nodded.

Derek said, "You remember the things you were saying?"

"Weird," said Corey. "Bringing who home? Weird." He laughed.

"Yeah," Derek said thoughtfully, more to himself than to his brother, "maybe hypnosis was premature. That seemed to be a bit drug-based. We get those hallucinations every so often. It's expected." Then again, more certainly, "It's expected. Predictable."

"You know, son," said Clay, "you never finished your salmon. You want to finish it? You hungry?"

He nodded.

Clay put his arm around his boy's shoulders, then turned to Derek, displaying his father/son bond with defiance, exuding protectiveness and possession, eyes declaring "This boy is mine."

"Did you want to comment on something?" Derek asked.

Clay nodded. "Just this—I don't think you understand everything, Der. I know I don't either. But you seem not to know your own . . . whatever. I don't think you understand women, for one thing. You're astounded by them, scared. And I want to say that I miss Ellen. I want to go home. I feel sorry for you, Derek, that you don't have a wife. Or a son. I feel sorry for you that you're missing it. Like Dad. Just missing it." He turned to Corey. "Come eat," he said.

"Calling it quits?" Derek demanded. "You think you know how to help things better than I do? You think escape solves anything? You think you can abandon the problem and it'll go away? Now who's like Dad! You think you can run away and hide from the truth, Clay? Or from me?"

"No," said Clay. "No. I don't know. I just don't feel comfortable with your methods, that's all."

"I challenge your precious faith—is that it?"

"Maybe. Maybe that's it. It has to be my decision though." He gave Derek his Bishop Reynolds look. "Yes, I'm calling it quits."

"Love's not a cure-all," Derek called. "The script goes deeper than your heart can ever reach, Clay. You should know that!"

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Clay led his son into the cabin. Derek leaned against a birch, slid down its white, moonlit bark. He was shivering inside, his mind sending shock waves to the pit of his gut.

The taunts of his ex-wives painted him a coward, a romantic worm, a monster who devoured indiscriminately.

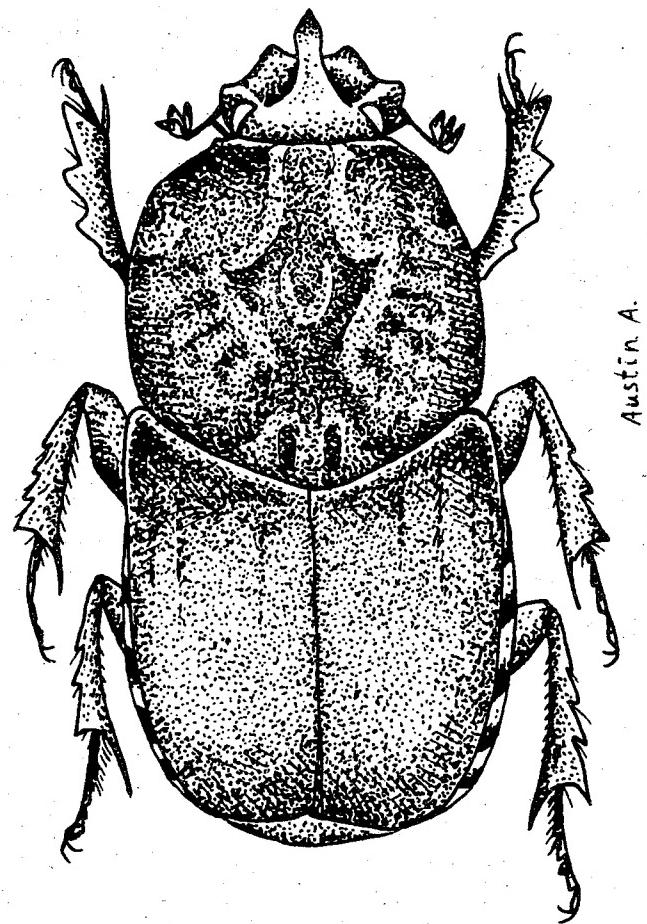
He was none of those sorry illusions. He had wanted only to help, wanted only to set things right, to be real, unchained, true.

Overhead, a meteor leapt from its mother star, trailing a stream of orange that bloomed to white and disappeared.

"Corey will die without me," he told the star, that hostess of the anxious, leaping light. "Corey will die!"

The scent of hyacinths moved certainly up his nostrils.

Oh sweet, sweet perfume! For the life of him, he did not want to breathe it!



Jagran

Loretta M. Sharp

At first the village men did not object when a few wives received five-goat loans from the women's group; but they balked when their women decided they wanted their own meeting place. Still, the wives applied for a loan and laid each brick of the single-room building. Tonight, all night, every one will dedicate it by singing, eating and staying awake. The men call it a "community center," but the women know better.

Having learned about this center built by village women, you come by jeep for your first *jagran*. At dusk the women are still cooking, but the men cluster around the young Bengali woman from the group who has brought a generator and lights. You sit on the new porch and watch the men pour kerosene and attach this to that. Little boys surround them in a tight, wide-eyed circle, eager as the rasp of dung beetles, self-important, self-invited: a pell-mell crawling to unaccustomed night light. The girls gather around you, the first brave one touching your barrette. Another pulls at your skirt. Then small peltings thump your back and legs; you brush at what must be moths drawn to the light. But no, dung beetles fly and so can you as you bolt from the porch, out of the light, surprised that here in the Rajasthani desert you are still a ten-year-old child . . .

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... At ten, stepping on dry maple leaves, you spotted a beetle and crushed it. The crack of its shell shocked you from indifferent assault. That night, all night, you dreamed of walking on a sidewalk that gleamed with beetles: crunch, crunch—the street, too, shimmered with beetles and you woke at those hard-backed crackings ...

Decades later, in another continent, in the Rajasthani desert, and you still run from a misstep.

You head for the jeep but the women have prepared their rice, *dal*, and sweets; quick as night-flying things, the daughters intercept you, pull you back to the porch as they brush away beetles. There's nothing for it but to sit down, your skin a thin sheath of prickles, every nerve waving two new antennae. The women follow their daughters' hands to your hair, collar, buttons. But they are not children and they are too many as they circle you, veiled in red silk. You are *lingam* and *yoni*, groped for like the holy of holies. They want to know what your skirt is made of and you say, "Khadi, khadi," as though Hindi were spoken in Rajasthan. Fingers touch your slip, move from your ankles to the knees, checking bare legs. A flashlight beam moves over you, relentless as the laying on of hands. How can you stand this unmasking, the crush of so much revelation? It doesn't help when one woman unveils herself, then another, and still others, all smiling approbation. How long until midnight when the jeep will go, and why did you ever leave Montana? You wish you could faint or wake up. But you do not faint and this is no dream, so you give over, hoping that at least where all these hands are, the beetles cannot be.

When the *Qawwal* begins the sweet *bhajans*—voice and *dholak* pleading entreaties in the cooling desert night—all but the beetles settle down. An hour of devotionals and then the men take a break. Now the women shift to the microphone, voices more truly mixed than their castes. Indiscriminately they sit near and lean toward the smiling, almond-eyed Bengali.

You stand up to watch and brush away beetles as casually as you

can. The women address Krishna, their clear voices repeating. They sing of the need to examine all knowledge—

Lugaiya baata kar lo bandh

Gyan mey dhyan laga lo rey.

—and they agree to help Krishna take care of the cow with no horn, the peacock with no beak, the girl with no brother.

Their faces are covered, but nothing veils the old commitments to soothe children and men. Before the women turn the *jagran* back to the men, they offer one new song taught by the Bengali. "Sisters," they sing, "let us try to explain seven things to keep in mind":

You must not remain illiterate; even if you have something to give, no one will listen.

You must not drink or smoke; such things are death without dying.

You must stop having too many children,
stop marrying them early,
stop giving dowry.

You must stop serving the death feast,
stop all castism; there are no differences in God's house.

Such injunctions cut at all custom, but the voices ring true and the food smells good. No one is afraid.

You are quieted too. Safely veiled from your own constraints, you feel part of a circle as the notes rise, distinct as stars, immediate as the beetles, singing the possibility for change, the need for trust, the delight in being awake—finally, finally awake.

jagran: a "stay awake," an all-night celebration.

dal: lentils

lingam: a vertical or phallic symbol; a *yoni* is a circular depression or female symbol. Both are honored or worshipped.

khadi: cotton.

qawwal: a special singer of Indian *bhajans*, or devotionals.

dholak: a musical instrument like a drum.

death feast: an expensive, traditionally mandated funeral feast that financially cripples families for years.



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The Quilting Effect

Pauline Mortensen

What is the short story? I know it's different from a novel, because people who write novels always seem to know where they are going. For one thing, they have the beginning on one side and the ending on the other. And all they have to do is fill in all that white space in the middle. And they can do it too. Because they are up to it. But people who write short stories, on the other hand, are sorry, fragmented individuals, with many beginnings and many endings. The white spaces are lean, indeed, and writers must carve as if out of granite each perfect first and last line.

In fact, if you were new to this quadrant of the galaxy, and you wanted to ask directions to Temple Square, and the first person you asked was a short story writer, you'd never make it. You'd need a longer narrative to sustain you. I know this for a fact. I know of at least three alien couples who asked Levi Peterson the way to Temple Square and they are still wandering around in the desert somewhere south of Moab. Then there was that Lebite starship which passed through Provo last September. They asked Darrell Spencer the way to Temple Square and were never heard from again.

This problem with short story writers has been going on for some time, and it's more than a regional problem. In fact, I'm sure a short story writer is what Plato had in mind when he banished the poets from his rhetorical heaven. Not to be confused with the money changers

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Christ kicked out of the temple. That would be your novelists.

At any rate, the short story writer has come down to us now at the end of the twentieth century with a new form of devilmint. And that devilmint is pluralism. Much has been said of pluralism in the sanctioned sense—from Brigham Young to Roland Barthes. When it comes to sanctioning pluralism, Brigham Young and Roland Barthes are in full agreement. They are both for it. But when it comes to signifieds, they part company. And did on many occasions. In fact, Brother Roland would say, if he were here today, that in the ideal text, "the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest"; the ideal text is a "galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds," a text with many entrances and no one authoritative door.

Now we are talking pluralism. That's Pluralism, with a capital *P* and that rhymes with *T* and that stands for Trouble. It's trouble because the more plural the text, the less it is written. And that's double trouble if you're a creative writing teacher trying to convince your student, who happens to be up on his postmodern theory, that his story still needs work. Literature is a cacography, he says. And then he explains to you what that means. Cacography is bad handwriting, he says. It is a figurative expression, which means I don't have to explain myself. I don't have to account for my text or anything else that I have said. It just is. Let it be. Which leaves you tapping your foot in a literary quandry, wondering just what they will throw at you next.

It's trouble for other reasons as well. Barthes was speaking of our reading of a single text, but feminists have picked up on this idea of pluralism and twisted it around to suit themselves. And what they did with it should not ever be mentioned in public. But I will mention it just this once.

Feminists like this idea of many doors. They don't like getting trapped inside and being objectified in the text. They want to write their own text. With themselves as heroes, not heroines. Can you imagine that? They want to save themselves. But damn it, when it comes right down to it, what they really want is to change history.

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Change the way everything has been recorded and perceived from the beginning of whenever. They don't know when to leave well enough alone. We're lucky to have gotten this far without blowing everything to pieces. And that's with men in charge of the world. Can you imagine what a woman would do to it? But that's another story.

The problem with feminist writing is that it just came along too late. About the time we articulated the difference between the signifier and the signified and discovered that all literary texts are cacographies, intentional obscurities, along came the women with their fancy handwriting and started writing well and making sense. And other marginalized positions began asserting themselves, battling it out for the mainstream, trying to say something without saying anything. Quite a balancing act. A Ringling Brothers, three-ring circus.

What the feminists said was, Yes we like the idea of pluralism. We like the idea of looseness at closure. That way no one closes us inside ever again. And yes, we like the idea of multiplicity. Let us hear the voices of community instead of the one and only tragic hero. For if the tragic hero is male, the prize is always a woman, sometimes money, maybe a chalice or two. And if the tragic hero is female, she is doomed to fail. If she struggles to break free of the cage, as in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, her tragic flaw is the fact that she struggled. The plot demands that she must die. So let's get rid of that idea—the struggle of the lone protagonist. Let us hear the music of many voices. In fact, let us create a multivocal text. And let us put it in the big top—a novel. That's what feminists did with it. They took the idea of one glorious text and distributed it like cheese to impoverished voices. And now what you have is a lot of rabble running around in collections trying to say something. This voice answering that. That voice echoing this.

Now the short story writer who has had her close encounters of the Derrida kind can practice her pluralism beyond the sanctioned confines of the marriage of good and evil, of truth and fiction, of characterization and plot. She can practice such pluralism because Derrida and his others have deconstructed all those innocently

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paired heirarchies and left us all standing around trying to match our shoes with our gloves, our hands with our feet, our ears with our elbows. Nothing seems to fit just right anymore. The whole world's gone to hell in a hand basket. This story has no ending. That story has no plot. Story C is just too feminist. Story C isn't feminist enough. Story C would have been a story, if it had just been written about the man. All those marginalized texts. Don't they know there is nothing left to be said?

And Black writers are just as bad. And Indian writers. Don't get me started. Did I mention Louise Erdrich, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Cade Bambara? They all twist pluralism around to their own ends. Nothing matches up anymore. Left and right. Right and wrong. Us and them. The hour is nigh and the short story writer is the most mismatched brideperson of the lot. And I don't even want to think about those five virgins without any oil in their lamps. It's just too much.

So what we have in contemporary fiction are two strains of pluralism. This hits us especially hard when it comes to the short story because pluralism is related to the silences in a story, the parts which are not written. In other words, when it comes to silences, a short story is full of it. In the Barthesian text, the reader must rewrite the text as he reads in order to fill in the silences. And where does the reader get the raw material to write the text he is reading, but from his own cultural script, a script feminists see as politically, socially, and intellectually authored from the male point of view. Without a cultural or theoretical script behind a text to help readers fill in the silences, the fictional text must break silences in order to be read at all. This limits its pluralistic potential in the way Barthes defines it. Rather than multivocal texts which resist being read, feminist texts tend to break silences and insist on being read.

According to the Barthesian position, feminist texts are univocal and political, and seem to have a lot of old axes to grind. According to the feminist position, all texts are political, including the avant-garde, which hopes to silence a myriad of literary texts being born late into the canon, but which are learning to speak nevertheless.

So here we are, on page six, with no thesis, and five more pages to

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kill. Let me put this another way. When I sit down to write my short story, as a woman, as a Mormon, as a Western writer, and as a person from any other marginal group to which I belong, I am faced with two questions. How much should I put in? How much should I leave out? These questions have got to be easier for the novelist. You just put everything in.

We are probably all familiar with the naive Mormon text that tries to explain too much, because the writer is sure no one is going to be able to understand the strange way we live. It's a dilemma. But the naive Mormon writer is right. The text can't be read unless she writes it in or limits her audience or pretends she's not a Mormon and makes up stuff she doesn't understand or care about. It's been my experience that writing stuff you don't care about only works when you are getting paid for it.

At any rate, the question is how to cope with the problem of pluralism, our struggle towards it, our struggle against it. I think they should make a pill for this. I'd buy it. But since they don't, I'll put the question yet another way, "How much pluralism can a text take before it flies apart at the seams into chaos? If I am the only person who can read my text, is it still literary?" Is that what Barthes proposes in his flight from the univocal text, the sound of a thousand voices amplified to a cacophonous roar? And is that what Derrida means by the deconstructive act, that the ultimate condition is to blast the text to pieces, then sit around looking at so much dust? I hardly think so. But I think it's what we hear. The metaphors are Derrida's and Barthes's to be sure—"deconstruction" and "writing degree zero." Metaphors which key into our subversive writer-selves so that we shut out the part where Derrida talks about reconstruction. Or where Barthes goes on for 200 pages to elaborate a merely multivocal text, something in the bad handwriting of Balzac.

I guess what I am saying is, it's not that I disagree with Derrida and Barthes per se, but the myth of Derrida and Barthes, a myth created by their strategic sense of metaphor. That is, in order to get our attention, someone has been lighting fuses to see just how far we will jump. And according to my estimation, we have been jumping pretty

high. Even with all those lead weights in our bellies. We have been so concerned about the rhetoric of deconstruction that we have forgotten about the rhetoric of reconstruction. Not that the idea ever really disappeared or was nullified by some cosmic theory. It has always been there. But it has been run over by a train, sort of flattened out on the ground. Waiting for the receding sound of metal wheels before it can get back up. It has always been there—inherent in every lifting of the pen. The reconstructive act, poised to rewrite the world. Don't get me wrong. I'm not affirming anything here but the pure and not so pure act of making. Whether you choose to make chocolate chip cookies or mud pies, that is your business. The point is that there are two impulses in the literary act, and this is especially true of the short story act; one is the impulse to take the world apart, and the other one is to put it back together. Remake it in our own image, perhaps. But make it nevertheless.

What I offer, then, is a shifting of the metaphor. Instead of writing to rend the perceived cultural script, what we actually do is write to render it. Not in the sense that someone renders a likeness, but in the pioneer sense of rendering meat, where you melt away the fat and what you have left over is something you can relate to, like dinner. Only this is a yuppie postmodern dinner, of course. Where you taste a little bit of all the exotic fare, but when you are done there is still plenty of food left over on your plate.

To render: to make, to do, to perform, to furnish, to provide, to pay back. The list goes on. In fact, if you compare the possibilities for *rend* versus *render*, an unabridged dictionary would offer you about an inch of definition for *rend*, whereas *render* goes on for half a column—just to show you where the true possibilities for fiction are. In fact, if you were to chart this thing out on an X,Y graph in DrawPerfect, it might very well resemble a parabolic curve with the absolute univocal text at one end and the absolute cacophonous text at the other and all the literary variety in the bulging middle.

But *render* is such an ugly word. You've got all that lard dripping all over the place. What we need is something softer and more refined. Yet something that can rip the traditional text to shreds,

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cannibalize it, digest it, and then reinvent it. What we need is a metaphor that takes it apart and puts it back together. What we need is—the Quilting Effect.

The Quilting Effect—one woman's view of the essence of post-modern short fiction. To begin with, the new short story is a non-traditional text, a remake, a hybrid, creating new possibilities out of old fictions. Parody and realism together at last. Monolithic themes cut all the way down to the bias, then sewn back together against the grain. A remake, because on waking up one morning I discovered that the old expectations of narrative wouldn't do. The hero in his place. And me in mine. Gone are the lone stars, log cabins, little maids. Gone are the ring quilts, chain quilts, temple quilts. Gone are the pastels, flowers, and percales. Gone are the thimble blisters, needle pricks, and blood. Yes, it's different than it was.

The simple nine-patch text has now escalated twenty-one patches. Instead of the one dominant effect, there is a galaxy of meaning in every patch. The text is multilayered, juxtaposed, less blended. It is not like the blended text which is stored in cedar chests, wrapped in cellophane, tucked in closets to save for generations. It is not like the blended text which lies quietly across the bed when you lay it out to show your friends. It doesn't violate the room.

On the other hand, what room can contain thirty-two dinosaurs, two mammoths, and a saber tooth tiger? This text fits nowhere with complete ease, not in the feminist camp, in the French camp, in the Mormon camp, or even the minimalist camp. And yet each camp can claim it for its own. The text sleeps alone, yet it sleeps around.

This text has many voices. Some of them shall be voices that we recognize, and others shall speak in tongues, with other hearts and aspirations of their own.

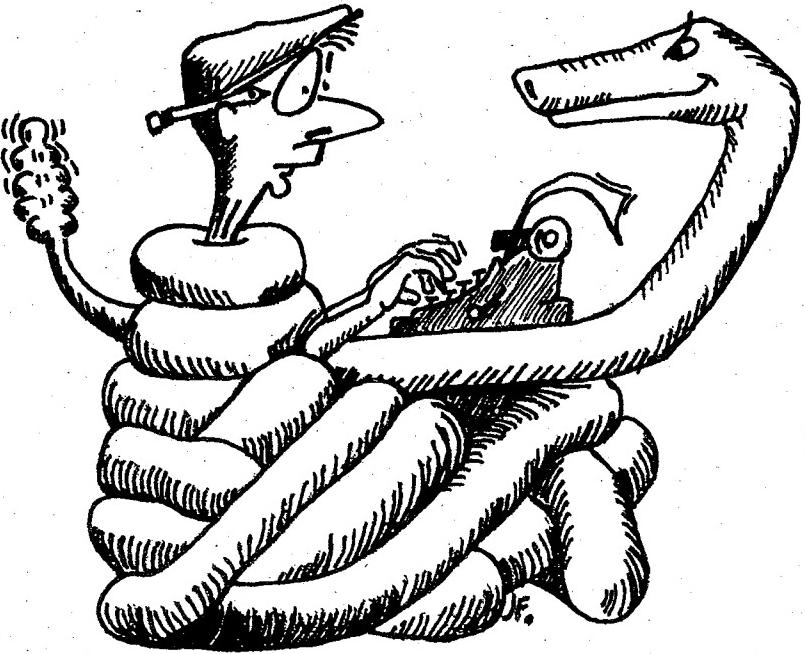
This text is not as minimalist as it once was, because less is less, not more. More is bold. But since there is a literary ban on authorial intrusion, the more text has a vested interest in details. Who could have predicted the effects of neon thread. The sharpness of Sharp Tooth's teeth. The pearlescence of Sarah's eye. Details discovered in process and sewn in. Details pulled from many drawers. Details which

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come bubbling up from who knows where. Accidents of the thread.

The postmodern short story is a multivalent text, then. Multivalence is also a Barthesian term. But it belonged to the electricians first. The multivalent text impedes meaning. Resists interpretation. But as all electricians know, the current gets through nevertheless, or else there is no spark.

The postmodern short story is a multivocal text, then, because many voices can now speak. And we dare not ask, as we did of Faulkner, which is the one true voice, because many voices are valid. So let us not say, when we are done, that this is a story about the mammoth, when we are surrounded by reptiles. Or let us not say that this is a story about thread, when we are surrounded by reptiles. But first let us say, this is a story about reptiles, I see that now. Then let's get on with it—and maybe we'll talk about the thread.



James Freeman

Constrictions, Potentials, and Margins: Thoughts on Mormon Writers

Mark Edward Koltko

We were talking over *falafel* in a Moroccan restaurant on the east side of Greenwich Village in Manhattan. He was a noted poet, visiting from out of town, the winner of a major literary award, published in some of the most respected journals in the United States, a man whose current book of poetry had garnered admiration from other accomplished poets. Although he had served as an LDS missionary some years before, he had left the Church at the time we spoke. We talked about mentors, publishing, editors, poets admired and despised. But, as it often happens when two writers get together who share an LDS connection, we also talked about Mormon writers and Mormon literature.

He said that the Church is too constrictive of individual experience. "There are no Great Mormon Writers," in part because Mormons do not have available to them enough leeway in how they may live, what they may think, how they may feel. He continued, "I know a lot of 'Mormon' writers, but if they are any good, they've either left the Church or they're disaffected even if they have left their names on the rolls." Real literature comes "from the margin of experience," and Mormon writers are either too timid or too restricted by their

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religion to live out on that margin. To speak of "Mormon writers" as such is to speak of "big fishes in a very small pond," presumably a reference to the size and insularity of the Mormon writer's community and the Mormon reading public.

I left our meeting dissatisfied and troubled. The discussion reminded me of a recent conversation with an LDS feminist essayist, who spoke of her discouragement at the paucity of solid Saints who were admirable writers. If we are to have our Shakespeares and our Miltons, as Orson F. Whitney predicted (or prophesied?), then where have they been during the last century of ferment in the world of literature and society? Or is it really the truth that Mormonism constricts individual experience so much that there is no room for true literature to breathe?

To wrestle with these issues, I have to reintroduce an old distinction that has come upon a bad name of late: the distinction between "the Church" versus "the Gospel." Eugene England's recent book, *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel*, seems to have erased the distinction for many people. Although the book is worthwhile, the distinction is not only real, but crucial. The distinction is part of a threefold division that I find useful to discuss things Mormon: the Church, the Gospel, and Folk Religion.

"The Church" is the organizational structure, the wards and branches within which we experience our communal Mormon life. It is also the set of rules, policies, and guidelines—written and unwritten—which define "official" Mormondom:

"The Gospel" is the spiritual heart of LDS experience. It is the legitimate doctrinal and experiential underpinning to Latter-day Saint spirituality. As such, it is communicated in the scriptures and the ineffable, basic in its fundamentals and yet cosmically all-encompassing. It is ancient, eternal, and now.

"Mormon Folk Religion" is what happens to the Gospel after it is filtered, transmitted (and warped) through human minds. The overt aspects of Mormon Folk Religion are sometimes comical in their literalness, rigidity, and naiveté: the Saint who wonders aloud "how

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can Brother Flugelman get a temple recommend with that beard?" and so forth. But the more subtle aspects of Mormon Folk Religion are less amusing and more insidious. People who hold to Folk Religion sincerely and devoutly believe that things such as the "beard" example above are tenets of the Gospel. And so-called intellectuals are as liable to Folk Religion as their less intellectual cousins: the Folk Religion of an "intellec'chal" may hold to different tenets than those of a "Section 89'er," but it is no less false.

What stances do these three entities take towards literature as an art form?

Although Cracroft and Lambert's anthology, *A Believing People* (1974), demonstrated that Mormons have a long literary tradition of a sort, the anthology itself and our subsequent literary history demonstrate that *literary* literature, if you will, has no place in Mormon Folk Religion. In plain language, Mormon Folk Religion is hostile to literature as art. In terms of style, Folk Religion insists that writing be what is politely termed "accessible": plain, undemanding, able to be grasped without a lot of stretching. More importantly, Folk Religion dictates that promoting faith and proselytizing be the explicit purpose of writing. We are not talking James Joyce here, or Thomas Mann, or even Thomas Merton. There is no room here for the concerns of a Camus, a Sartre, a Kafka, an Eco. Much of twentieth-century literature in Europe and the United States has been about ambiguity, relativity, doubt, moral and ethical dilemmas; about the difficulties of finding meaning in a universe of pain and suffering, and about a world where one can live the guidelines of Christianity and still confront intense emotional pain, social ostracism, violence, and incurable disease. It is not enough to say, as Folk Religion Literature does, that "Truth R Us"; the basic approach of Folk Religion is to ignore disturbing questions of life in favor of facile solutions. Real literature, however, grapples with questions rather than preempting them.

In the institutional Church, we see a different picture, although still not an encouraging one. The Church is not so much *hostile* to

artistic literature as it is *indifferent*. Not often has a Mormon author's short stories or poetry resulted in a call to chat with the stake president. But the institutional Church does little to encourage literature as art. Yet, should we expect this to be otherwise?

What my acquaintance said in the restaurant was true in this respect: Art does live on the margins. Institutions do not nourish the margins, they nourish the center. Institutions are inherently conservative, protectionist, while real art is often inherently unsettling, as irritating as the Socratic gadfly. I once attended a discussion of LDS playwrights at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, in which there was grousing about the lack of financial support in the Church for serious drama; I thought this naive. Institutions are enthusiastic about conformity, not about the struggle within the soul that characterizes artistic literature. If the Church as an institution is indifferent to true literature, the Church is only acting according to its role: an organization concerned with its own survival and perpetuation.

Psychohistorical analysis might be useful here. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is taught to the typical psychology student, yet it is rarely applied to an analysis of societies, where it has vast utility. Maslow's idea is that an individual's motivational structure forms a sort of pyramid, in which one must address lower levels before one can reach higher levels. Individuals must address their need for physical safety before they can work on their artistic potential. So it is with societies: a culture addresses its needs for physical safety before its needs for aesthetic fulfillment.

It is easy to forget how hostile the surrounding society has been to Mormonism until fairly recently. Only since World War II has the image of the Church become predominantly favorable among Americans. Before that, Mormonism had the image of a vaguely kinky, traitorous cult in the desert (witness the testimony given at the Reed Smoot trials). In the late nineteenth century the Church was disenfranchised and hunted, even the target of the United States Army. The worst persecutions happened in the generation just before the current leadership of the Church was born. These persecutions were the dinnertime conversation of the Church's leadership during their

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formative years. If the Church still has something of a siege mentality, this is because there was a time within living memory when the Church *was* under siege. And art is not a priority for a society under siege. Under siege, a community is concerned with survival and the continuation of its traditions; under truce, a recently-besieged community is concerned primarily with expanding its power base. So in this generation, the Church is concerned, in its literature, with the promotion and spreading of the faith in the clearest terms possible.

England did not develop its Shakespeares and Miltons during its most devastating crises, such as the Roman or Norman invasions, the plague years, or the Battle of Britain. Shakespeares and Miltons are associated with years of relative safety. In their time, there was turmoil, to be sure, but it was the turmoil associated with building and maintaining and expanding empires, not the turmoil associated with clinging to life itself. Shakespeares and Miltons are products of a consciousness of plenty, of bustling enterprise, not products of poverty or the struggle to survive. In contrast, the latter, "deprivation consciousness," can only seek to use art as a weapon or, at best, a tool.

I am reminded of a few lines in "The Call," the opening story in Neal Chandler's fine collection, *Benediction*. A young man, Emmett, explains his intent to become a writer to his bishop; the bishop responds with the essence of survival-oriented Folk Religion.

"A writer. Well . . . I think that's a fine idea." The words were pronounced with carefully metered enthusiasm. "I think the Church could use a good writer. Did you know . . . that except for the scriptures, only two books in this dispensation have qualified as required reading for the Church? Apostle Talmage wrote both of them in the temple."

Yes, the Church can always *use* a good writer, but one uses a tool for one's own purposes, often in narrow, even simplistic ways. If we wish to enjoy our Shakespeares and Miltons now, we better not wait for Zion to get comfortable with the idea of having them, or we are in for a long wait.

So far we have considered Mormon Folk Religion and the Church. But what of the Gospel and literature? That is a different story.

Once, after a session at a Sunstone Symposium, I fell into conversation with someone who, like myself, was a convert from the East Coast. He told me that his initial attraction to the Church was the grandeur of the thought of Joseph Smith, the universe-spanning vision of a man who tied together cosmos and compassion, social concern and spirituality; yet my friend said he had been deeply disillusioned with his religion as a result of seeing how the central stakes of Zion actually functioned. On the downside, this is an example of how Folk Religion and Institution-As-Religion can harm faith. But on the upside, it is a telling personal example of the heart of Mormonism and its nascent artistic literature: the Gospel.

I think of Abraham and his vision of the premortal drama with its cast of billions, of Moses and his vision of curtains of galaxies. I think of the dilemma of faith that descends upon the righteous when they are faced with disaster and disease (Job), the difficulties in reconciling faith with sexual impulse (David and Solomon), the despair when adherence to the right seems to bring only imprisonment, torture, and death (Joseph Smith), the pain of ultimate, lonely sacrifice (the Savior). I think of situations where all available choices are full of pain, and it is a matter of choosing which pain is best to suffer (Eve and Adam).

The Gospel, as evidenced by the scriptures, does not shy away from the difficult, ambiguous, painful questions of human existence. The Gospel lays out a pathway but does not provide easy answers for the questions that pathway traverses. The Gospel does not proscribe questions or issues as "off limits" for consideration. For that matter, the Gospel is open to a variety of literary modes (as evidenced in the Old Testament, which combines narrative, allegory, several styles of poetry, drama, and even encryption, as in Ezekiel—Thomas Pynchon and Umberto Eco should be so pleased).

All of this says that the Gospel, the heart of Mormonism, is not only *not* hostile to artistic literature, it provides the most fertile landscape available for the creation of depth-plumbing, height-climbing literature. The proscriptions on thought and expression that some people see as aspects of Mormonism are really Folk Religion or institutional policies.

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Mormon authors are not censored by their religion. More than anything else, they are self-censored. They are worried about what people will say—people like their "good Mormon neighbors," their families, perhaps their bishops and stake presidents. But one cannot create art when one is concerned about what people will say, regardless of who those people are.

Does this seem too tough, too pure an analysis? No, we do not live in a social vacuum; there are consequences to taking unpopular positions or asking unpopular questions. But, if we are serious about creating a vital Mormon literature, we must be willing to engage these consequences, rather than avoid them. So what is a writer to do?

It is not a matter of being true to one's aesthetic vision versus being true to the Gospel. This is a fake tension, a false dichotomy. The real tension is between being true to one's *internalized* truth versus allegiance to an *external* folk or institutional culture. Folk cultures and institutions have margins because people find it too threatening to deal with certain issues. But the Gospel has no margins, no unaskable questions. The proper allegiance of the Mormon writer, as is the proper allegiance of a writer in any age, is to the truth; indeed, the Mormon writer has a distinct advantage in this regard, possessing truth not available to Shakespeare or a Milton. But that allegiance *will* bring a Mormon writer into rapid conflict, particularly with the Folk Religions, the false faiths that masquerade as Mormonism. This is unavoidable. To accept the call to Art, one must accept the call to Conflict.

Yes, there are time-honored ways to minimize conflict. One can use a pseudonym, or several. (Does it trouble you to think you might never be known as a writer under your own name? This is worthy of careful reflection.) One can live away from the center of institutional power, externally or internally. This means consciously accepting the role of Outsider, a role accepted by many writers who could not accomplish what they did if they had been Insiders. I think it no surprise that many of the most important writers of this century have

been expatriate (e.g., Joyce, Hemingway), reclusive (e.g., Pynchon, Salinger), or otherwise Outside the mainstream culture (e.g., everyone from Kafka and other European Jewish writers to Ginsberg and the Beats). But, in some fashion, one must find a space (psychological, emotional, spiritual, or physical) where it is possible to maintain one's existence at least partially independent of Folk and Folk Religion.

It was said during the early years of the American Republic that eternal vigilance was the price of freedom. The same principle applies to artistic expression. This means, frankly, that we need to stand up for individual expression in cases where no Gospel guideline is being traversed. In fact, since the Gospel does not allow unaskable questions or unfaceable issues, there is nothing a faithful Saint could write that could be distinctly against the Gospel. Further, if we accept the tautological premise that a true Saint will not attempt to persuade someone to reject the Gospel, there is nothing a true Saint can write that will violate the Gospel. The Gospel allows us the freedom to investigate choices, to explore meanings, wherever those journeys lead us. I state this categorically, inviting debate and disputation.

In a universe where billions of souls have rejected God to his face, the Gospel permits me to write about sin as well as redemption. In a world where millions die of hunger and disease, the Gospel permits me to write of despair. In a reality where heavenly parents create eternal children, the Gospel permits me to write about sexuality. In a century where human beings have done the inhuman to other beings—by Auschwitzes, Palestinian refugee camps, pogroms, McCarthyite witch hunts, black lists, secret police, and death squads—the Gospel permits me to write about evil. It is not the topics I address that make me a Mormon writer; it is the angle of approach I take, and the Gospel makes many available to me. In a plan that allows human beings to attain godhood and create everything, it behooves the Mormon writer not only to write about everything, but to write about it as no one else does, exposing the joy and glory that lie like opals hidden in the tangled undergrowth of pain and degradation that beset this telestial world.

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During the question and answer portion of the Sunstone Symposium session of LDS playwrights that I mentioned earlier, I raised the issue of audience. It seemed to me that many of the participants made the fundamental mistake of writing primarily for a Mormon audience. My comment was brushed off, on the grounds that the surrounding society would be uninterested in literature based in a context of Mormonism. I felt that my colleagues were too timid.

Think of the Jewish writers. There are perhaps six million Jews in the United States, only twenty percent more than the number of Mormons, yet there is no lack of literature with nationwide distribution that deals with the Jewish experience, while Mormon writing is almost nonexistent on the national level. Chaim Potok, I. B. Singer, Philip Roth, Neil Simon—I have no hard figures, but I suspect that most who read these writers or enjoy the film or theatrical presentations of their work are not Jews. I don't think most of the people who saw *Fiddler on the Roof* were Jewish. How many non-Jews have read Michener's book on Jewish history, *The Source*? I was once in a packed movie theater to watch a dubbed version of a decades-old film about biblical Jews, *The Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston; of particular relevance to this discussion is the fact that the movie was dubbed in Japanese, since the theater was in Hiroshima.

The same principle applies to other religious minorities. Most of the people who see the film *Malcolm X* or read *The Satanic Verses* are not Islamic. I don't think most people who enjoyed the Harrison Ford film *Witness* were Amish. I don't think it was the Catholics who made *The Sound of Music* a success.

My point is this: there are no too-far-out subjects, only timid writers. LDS writers should write for national audiences as well as for Mormon ones. This seems hard for some LDS writers who are openly committed to the Gospel, but it is not so hard for others.

Robert Irvine's detective novels featuring Moroni Traveler are thinly disguised anti-Mormon trash, but his books still go into paperback and multiple printings. On the more literary front, Walter Kirn's collection of short stories, *My Hard Bargain*, is noteworthy in its lack of appreciation for the depth of Mormon spirituality, especially since five stories

of thirteen have LDS themes. Nonetheless, the book received special critical acclaim from the *New York Times Book Review* for both the hardcover (Knopf, 1990) and paperback (Washington Square/Pocket Books, 1992) releases. (Remember how short story collections were "unmarketable" for authors without novel credits, except, perhaps, by tiny publishing houses? Guess again.) I learned of Kirn's book through the *West Side Spirit*, a community newspaper for a section of Manhattan, not exactly a center of Mormon population.

In sum: While the folk aspects of Mormonism might militate against artistic literature, and while the institutional Church might ignore literature, the Gospel permits us, even encourages us, to investigate the great questions of life, existence, and society with all the art we have, no holds barred. We are limited only by ourselves, by our fear of offending our neighbors, and by our timidity at approaching the surrounding society with our voices. It is time for us to discard fear and embrace our visions of life.

Earlier in this essay, I compared the Church with the stages of Maslow's hierarchy of values. It may be some comfort to know that societies can *progress* through these stages as well as sit on them. After a society has addressed its need for safety and a respectable coexistence with other societies, it can then address its need for what Maslow called "self-actualization." This is the point at which the individual and the society attend to the need for aesthetic fulfillment. Maybe we are moving towards a time when, even in the institutional Church, there will be more interest in literature as art. But it would be a mistake to sit back and wait. To mix my metaphors, it is the calling of the writer to "push the envelope" from the inside, to serve as the Socratic gadfly that stings the slow ox of society along, to serve as midwife to the birth of the next generation of Zion.

Book Review

Personal and Political Activism: A Review of Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place by Terry Tempest Williams (Pantheon Books, 1991, Hardcover, \$21.00). Reviewed by Phillip A. Snyder, Assistant Professor of English and Alcuin Fellow at BYU.

Radical feminism as a theory is a movement of mind which addresses the most basic questions of politics: the constitution of the person in society; social as against natural determinations of relative status; the relationship between morality, justice, and power; the meaning and possibility of willed action; the role of thought and the theorist in politics; the nature of power and its distribution; the nature of community; the definition of the political itself. Packed into two conceptions of the meanings of "the personal" and "the political" are the meaning of their convergence.

—Catharine A. MacKinnon

In Mormon culture, authority is respected, obedience is revered, and independent thinking is not. I was taught as a young girl not to "make waves" or "rock the boat." . . . For many years, I have done just that—listened, observed, and quietly formed my own opinions, in a culture that rarely asks questions because it has all the answers. But one by one, I have watched the women in my family die common, heroic deaths. . . . The price of obedience has become too high.

—Terry Tempest Williams

Over the past year or so, in the course of my teaching job and my participation in the Book Group and the Speakers Bureau of the Utah Humanities Council, I have had occasion to discuss *Refuge* with a diverse group of people both in and outside academia. Not surprisingly I found their acclaim for the book to be nearly unanimous—they praised its wondrous, but restrained prose; its accurate and

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artful descriptions of the natural world; its courageously frank and profoundly moving depiction of a multi-generational family holding together in extremity; its recovery and reconstruction of American "nature writing" from the 19th-century tradition of Thoreau's *Walden* to the more recent work of Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, and many others; and the brilliant dovetailing of its multiple narrative lines, the stories of the various bird sightings after which the chapters are titled, of the rising Great Salt Lake's encroachment on the surrounding environment, and of the malignant growth of Diane Dixon Tempest's terminal cancer as she experiences the birth of her self through the process of death.

Somewhat to my surprise, however, many people also raised questions about Williams's departures from Mormon orthodoxy, such as describing women blessing women, suggesting that the Holy Ghost may be a woman, and worshipping at the Great Salt Lake instead of attending the General Conference of the Church. They seem to ignore the abiding faith that enlivens every line of *Refuge* and even Williams's ready acknowledgement of the spiritual power also present in more traditional forms of Mormonism, in particular the story of Thomas S. Monson's role in her mother's survival from the first occurrence of her cancer. Some people especially resented Williams's epilogue, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women," which outlines her belief that the cancer suffered by the women in her family was caused by the extensive nuclear testing done in southern Utah during the 1950s and which also describes her participation with nine other women in a ritual act of civil disobedience for which they are arrested. "Why did she have to add that business of the one-breasted women and the silly dancing through the streets of that radioactive town?" one woman asked. "None of that protesting stuff has much to do with the rest of the book. Why couldn't she just stick to the birds and her mother's illness?"

I suppose I have designed this review mostly in response to the issues raised by this particular reader and others who may share her opinion. In viewing the "political" epilogue as alien to the "personal" narrative it follows, we risk blinding ourselves to one of the great

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insights *Refuge* develops from its opening pages onward: that the personal is political. Indeed, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" may be the only kind of epilogue possible for *Refuge* because its call to action weaves together all of the book's thematic threads and provides us an option besides hopeful optimism or stoic resignation in the face our personal or our ecosystem's destruction. It explains dramatically why *Refuge* is subtitled an "unnatural history," the "un" resulting from causes man-made (gender-specific reference intended) which have intruded on Williams's family and place with catastrophic consequences, most notably for women and for Mother Earth. In this sense, *Refuge* is a decidedly feminist text, not that men have no stake in it or are insensitive to its message, but that their stake pales in comparison to the women's, for here it is the female body or landscape that deteriorates from disease or toxins and bears the mark of the surgeon or developer, not the male body. As Williams's cousin Lynne notes to her when the female pattern of cancer in their family becomes horribly obvious, "I resent so much being asked of the women and so little being asked of the men. . . . I'm scared, Terry. I'm scared for you and me" (261). No wonder Williams comes finally to the conclusion that the personal must become the political:

What I do know . . . is that as a Mormon woman of the fifth generation of Latter-day Saints, I must question everything, even if it means losing my faith, even if it means becoming a member of a border tribe among my own people. Tolerating blind obedience in the name of patriotism or religion ultimately takes our lives. (286)

While I cannot believe that Williams's activism could result in her loss of faith or her marginalization in the community—surely we are not that intolerant and stupid—it is nevertheless essential that she have enough faith to risk these consequences to help save her people, her places, and herself. Thus, as Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience" seems always to follow *Walden*, so too should "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" always follow *Refuge*.

If Williams's prologue does not give the reader enough clues about what will follow, then her rage in the first chapter against the destruction of the burrowing owls—named *Athene cunicularia* and

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thus emblematic of Athene, goddess of wisdom and the arts—by the Canadian Goose Gun Club should make her ideological and rhetorical stance as clear as the middle finger she sticks in one of their member's faces: "This is for you—from the owls and me" (13). Williams operates like a peregrine falcon among us immigrant, common starlings flying around the garbage dump we have made of our environment. To apply her description of the actual falcon to herself and her book, they may be "expelled by the flock but not without [their] prey"; they seize us in their talons to take us outside the flock by reminding us that "we project on to starlings that which we deplore in ourselves: our numbers, our aggression, our greed, and our cruelty. Like starlings, we are taking over the world.... What is the impact of such a species on the land? Quite simply, a loss of diversity" (56). And, without diversity, quite simply, we die, literally and figuratively. Despite the narrowness of their own privileged educational and socio-economic status, the extended Tempest family certainly illustrates the value of social and cultural diversity, thanks in large measure to the family's women. For example, John Tempest tells of an argument he and his wife, Diane, had during a 1973 trip to Hawaii in which she, in his words, "stood up in the middle of the restaurant, pulled the tablecloth off the table and said, 'That's it! I am no longer your slave! From now on, I'm doing what pleases me!' That was the beginning of women's liberation in this family" (206).

In a departure from conventional book review objectivity and also *Refuge*'s own refusal to preach at its readers, I want to conclude with a final bit of advice, however subjective and preachy it may be: if you haven't read *Refuge* yet, please get a copy and begin reading it, asking yourself the question Williams poses, "How do we empathize with the Earth when so much is ravaging her" (85)? If the book's reflections on that question trouble you, then you need to ask yourself why. Your own activism, both personal and political, may begin with the answers you find. Of course, your answers and activism need not match mine or Terry Tempest Williams's, but the essential diversity of our social and environmental ecosystems, as well as your own sense of self and sanctuary, will depend on them. And, if you need a

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safe place to contemplate these matters, I understand that the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is open to the public. Just don't disturb the birds; rather, let them disturb you—by calling you to action, as *Refuge* does, on behalf of Mother Nature and all of her children. If we and our world are to survive, we can have no other earth gods before her.